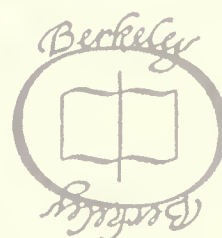
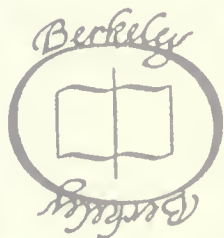
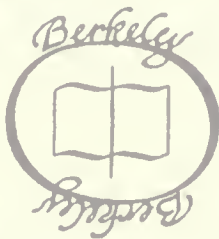


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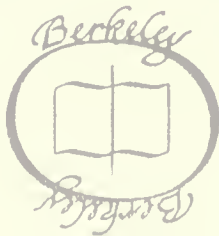
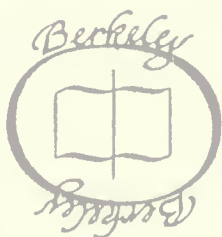
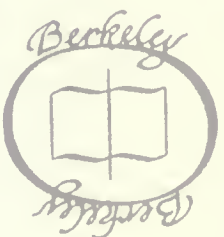
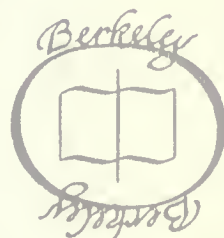
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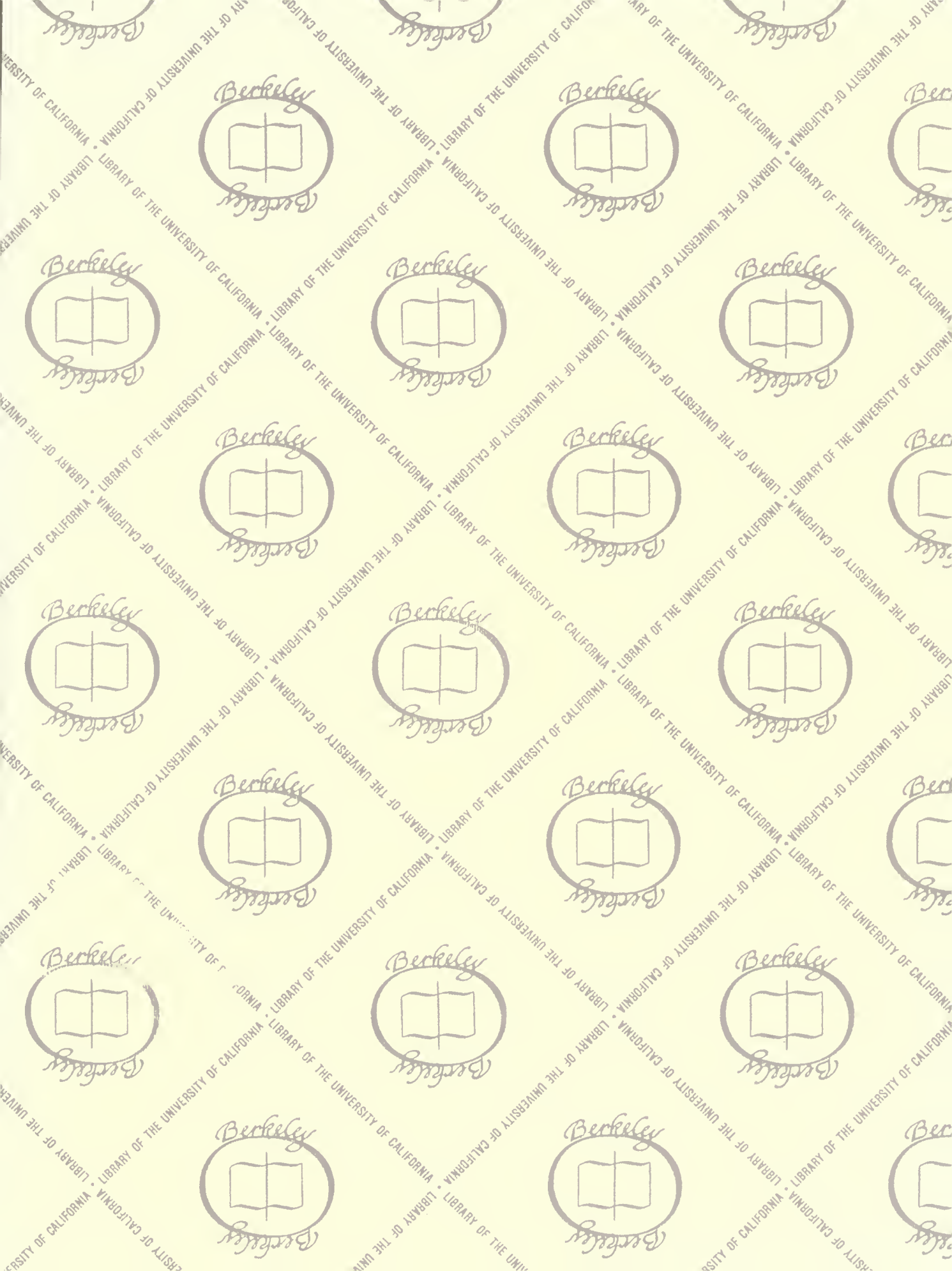


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Sierra Club History Series

SIERRA CLUB LEADERS, 1950s-1970s

Alexander Hildebrand	Sierra Club Leader and Critic: Perspective on Club Growth, Scope, and Tactics, 1950s-1970s
Martin Litton	Sierra Club Director and Uncompromising Preservationist, 1950s-1970s
Raymond J. Sherwin	Conservationist, Judge, and Sierra Club President, 1960s-1970s
Theodore A. Snyder, Jr.	Southeast Conservation Leader and Sierra Club President, 1960s-1970s

With Interview Introductions by
David Brower, Martin Hildebrand
Denny Shaffer, Nicholas Robinson

Interviews Conducted by
Ann Lage
1980-1981

Underwritten by
The National Endowment for the Humanities

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PREFACE

The Oral History Program of the Sierra Club

In fall 1969 and spring 1970 a self-appointed committee of Sierra Clubbers met several times to consider two vexing and related problems. The rapid membership growth of the club and its involvement in environmental issues on a national scale left neither time nor resources to document the club's internal and external history. Club records were stored in a number of locations and were inaccessible for research. Further, we were failing to take advantage of the relatively new technique of oral history by which the reminiscences of club leaders and members of long standing could be preserved.

The ad hoc committee's recommendation that a standing History Committee be established was approved by the Sierra Club Board of Directors in May 1970. That September the board designated The Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley as the official depository of the club's archives. The large collection of records, photographs and other memorabilia known as the "Sierra Club Papers" is thus permanently protected, and the Bancroft is preparing a catalog of these holdings which will be invaluable to students of the conservation movement.

The History Committee then focused its energies on how to develop a significant oral history program. A six page questionnaire was mailed to members who had joined the club prior to 1931. More than half responded, enabling the committee to identify numerous older members as likely prospects for oral interviews. (Some had hiked with John Muir!) Other interviewees were selected from the ranks of club leadership over the past six decades.

Those committee members who volunteered as interviewers were trained in this discipline by Willa Baum, head of the Bancroft's Regional Oral History Office and a nationally recognized authority in this field. Further interviews have been completed in cooperation with university oral history classes at California State University, Fullerton; Columbia University, New York; and the University of California, Berkeley. Extensive interviews with major club leaders are most often conducted on a professional basis through the Regional Oral History Office.

Copies of the Sierra Club oral interviews are placed at The Bancroft Library, at UCLA, and at the club's Colby Library, and may be purchased for the actual cost of photocopying, binding, and shipping by club regional offices, chapters, and groups, as well as by other libraries and institutions.

Our heartfelt gratitude for their help in making the Sierra Club Oral History Project a success goes to each interviewee and interviewer; to everyone who has written an introduction to an oral history; to the Sierra Club Board of Directors for its recognition of the long-term importance of this effort; to the Trustees of the Sierra Club Foundation for generously providing

the necessary funding; to club and foundation staff, especially Michael McCloskey, Denny Wilcher, Colburn Wilbur, and Nicholas Clinch; to Willa Baum and Susan Schrepfer of the Regional Oral History Office; and last but far from least, to the members of the History Committee, and particularly to Ann Lage, who has coordinated the oral history effort since September 1974.

You are cordially invited to read and enjoy any or all of the oral histories in the Sierra Club series. By so doing you will learn much of the club's history which is available nowhere else, and of the fascinating careers and accomplishments of many outstanding club leaders and members.

Marshall H. Kuhn
Chairman, History Committee
1970 - 1978

San Francisco
May 1, 1977
(revised May 1979, A.L.)

PREFACE--1980s

Inspired by the vision of its founder and first chairman, Marshall Kuhn, the Sierra Club History Committee continued to expand its oral history program following his death in 1978. With the assistance of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, awarded in July 1980, the Sierra Club has contracted with the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library to conduct twelve to sixteen major interviews of Sierra Club activists and other environmental leaders of the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, the volunteer interview program has been assisted with funds for training interviewers and transcribing and editing volunteer-conducted interviews, also focusing on the past two decades.

With these efforts, the committee intends to document the programs, strategies, and ideals of the national Sierra Club, as well as the club grassroots, in all its variety--from education to litigation to legislative lobbying, from energy policy to urban issues to wilderness preservation, from California to the Carolinas to New York.

Together with the written archives in The Bancroft Library, the oral history program of the 1980s will provide a valuable record of the Sierra Club during a period of vastly broadening environmental goals, radically changing strategies of environmental action, and major growth in size and influence on American politics and society.

Special thanks for the project's later phase are due to Susan Schrepfer, co-director of the Sierra Club Documentation Project; Ray Lage, cochair of the History Committee; the Sierra Club Board and staff; members of the project advisory board and the History Committee; and most importantly, the interviewees and interviewers for their unfailing cooperation.

Ann Lage
Cochair, History Committee
Codirector, Sierra Club Documentation
Project

Oakland, California
April, 1981

SIERRA CLUB ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
April 1982

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Martin Litton, Sierra Club Director and Uncompromising Preservationist, 1950s-1970s, 1982

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Sierra Club History Series

Alexander Hildebrand

SIERRA CLUB LEADER AND CRITIC:
PERSPECTIVE ON CLUB GROWTH, SCOPE, AND TACTICS,
1950s-1970s

With an Introduction by
Milton Hildebrand

An Interview Conducted by
Ann Lage in 1981

Underwritten by
The National Endowment for the Humanities

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ALEXANDER HILDEBRAND
1957

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INTRODUCTION

My qualifications for introducing the interviewee, and placing him in the context of his subject are, first, that I know him well, for he is my brother, and second, that I was sufficiently active in Sierra Club affairs myself (chairman of Natural Sciences Committee, manager of Burro trips, member of Conservation Committee) to have impressions of some of the "growth, scope, and tactics" of the club in the period in question.

Those were troubled times for the Sierra Club. Well, all times are troubled ones for conservation organizations--that is the nature and challenge of their mission. (I write these lines in the first year of the Reagan administration as secretary of the Interior, James Watt, is pushing hard to "unlock" the economic resources of our parks and forests.) But in those years the club was troubled from within as well as from without. In the preceding years most of the membership lived in California, most of its leadership lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, and the board meetings I first recall in the late 1940s were conducted with serious purpose, but with the informality and congeniality one would expect of companions of the trail. Then, during the 1950s and 1960s, membership increased and spread, publications multiplied, outings multiplied, chapters multiplied, the budget waivered, internal communications foundered, and within the club leadership a power struggle developed over ideology, tactics, and control. In a letter to the board of directors written in August, 1964, I cited numerous instances of unanswered letters about club business, unheeded committee reports, and the release to the media by the staff of statements on conservation issues prior to their consideration by the board. I said that "Neither as a member nor as a committee chairman do I know to whom I can address myself to be confident that my message will be heeded."

Alex had many qualities and abilities that suited him to serve the club in that period. As a lifelong camper and skier, he knew and loved the wilderness (with younger brother Roger, we had some outstanding backpack trips!). Also, he was an executive for Standard Oil before going into business for himself as a farmer. Consequently, he knew something about how industry and agribusiness think and work. This can be a great advantage when one must oppose them over the use of water, land, and air. In those days (at least) the club's board of directors tended to be stacked with lawyers, doctors, and teachers who often did not have this advantage. Alex tended to be a bit more practical and less an idealist than his peers in club leadership (sometimes to a greater degree, I acknowledge, than this professor). The balance he provided was invaluable at a time when idealists were holding out for all or nothing, and sometimes were using tactics that he (and I) considered unworthy in order to gain hallowed ends. He was willing to at least consider alternative proposals.

Club leaders in those days (at least), like those of many a lay organization, did not always recognize that a board meeting should not be an open forum but a place to accomplish informed legislation. Vocal minorities (some of it on the staff) delayed debate and forced reconsideration. Alex was among the first to recognize that the board should get on with its business, that reversing itself weakened its impact and credibility, that only the board should make policy, but that club growth required that the board delegate to staff and chapters the authority to act within such policy. He worked hard to know the issues well enough not to be "snowed" by zealous advocates of any persuasion. These approaches were overdue and much needed.

It is the opinion of this observer that the Sierra Club owes much to Alex. Hear what he has to tell you.

Milton Hildebrand

September 1981
Davis, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Alexander Hildebrand joined the Sierra Club in 1934 as a youth already familiar with the High Sierra from family burro trips and skilled as a skier from a year in Switzerland in 1930. Along with his father Joel (University of California Berkeley chemistry professor and president of the Sierra Club, 1937-1940), his brothers Milton and Roger, and his sister Louise, he frequented the Sierra Nevada in summer and winter and became an avid skier. After World War II, he became increasingly involved in Sierra Club affairs, chairing at various times the San Francisco Bay Chapter, the Winter Sports Committee, and the Lodges and Lands Committee.

With his interest in outdoor recreation and his subsequent experience in managerial roles with Standard Oil of California, Alex Hildebrand became a valued member of the Sierra Club Board of Directors [1948-1957, 1963-1966] during a period of considerable growth in membership, a changeover to a professional staff, and a general expansion of size and concerns. His contributions to club management and organization are evident in this interview, and many of his early suggestions for dealing administratively with the club's growth are now an integral part of club structure.

While accepting the club's growth in size, Hildebrand has opposed widening the scope of its concerns to areas he believes outside its expertise. Most adamantly, he has objected to what he regards as the emotional and sometimes strident tone of club positions and publicity. His point of view, clearly outlined in this interview, caused him to leave the club's active leadership in 1966 and to give up his membership entirely in the early seventies.

Having retired from Standard Oil to operate a small family farm in the San Joaquin delta area of northern California, Hildebrand maintains a high interest in environmental affairs related to water resources. He has been president of the Delta Water Users Association; an officer and principal spokesman for the South Delta Water Agency; and president of the San Joaquin River Water Users Company. In these capacities, he has several times found himself in direct conflict with Sierra Club policies, and he points out what he sees as the shortsightedness of the club's approach on water issues.

This interview took place on March 14, 1981, at the Hildebrand farm in Manteca, California. Mr. Hildebrand was well prepared for the interview, having looked over relevant papers from his files. These files relating to

his activity in the Sierra Club were subsequently placed in The Bancroft Library's Sierra Club papers. Also present at the interview was Alex's wife, Barbara, who skied with him at the club's Clair Tappaan ski lodge and assisted him on several of his projects for the club's board of directors.

Mr. Hildebrand reviewed the manuscript for accuracy but made no substantive changes. Tapes of the interview are available in The Bancroft Library.

Ann Lage
Interviewer/Editor

16 February 1982
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California Berkeley

I EARLY INVOLVEMENT IN THE SIERRA AND THE SIERRA CLUB

[Interview 1: March 14, 1981]##

Boyhood Pack Trips with the Hildebrand Family

Lage: We want to start a little bit with your family background to develop a sense of how you became interested in the out-of-doors and involved in conservation. Do you want to first give us some facts on your birthdate and place?

Hildebrand: All right, I was born in Berkeley in 1913 and spent all of my boyhood there. When I was about ten years old, they had the big Berkeley fire which burned us out, and we then moved to the Kensington Park area just north of Berkeley, which at that time was all vacant land practically. Ours was one of the first houses out in that area that was a little above the bottom of the hill, but below Arlington.

Lage: Is that the same house where your father lives now, on Coventry Road?

Hildebrand: That is the same house where my father lives now, so they've been there since 1924.

When I was still about three years old, I guess, my father and mother started taking me into the Sierra on burro trips, and we went pretty near every year until my youngest brother came along, and I was about nine. Then Dad decided that it was just too big a

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 54.

Hildebrand: job to pack for that big a family. So we went to the beach in summers at Capitola down near Santa Cruz for a few years until I was old enough to take over the packing. As soon as I could do the packing we went back to trips in the mountains and by that time began to take along friends of my sister and my friends. So usually the party was somewhat more than a family party. We had the Ratcliff boys and others go with us.

Lage: When you say the Ratcliff boys, tell me--

Hildebrand: It was the Walter Ratcliff family. We at times stepped up a notch and took mules as we got older. So we didn't have so many animals, but we still hiked and packed the mules.

Lage: Were these long trips?

Hildebrand: Oh yes, the larger trips usually lasted I think only a week or ten days; sometimes longer, however. Some of the earlier trips I know we at least two weeks long. So we spent a lot of time in the mountains and came to love it.

Then as I went to college and things got a little more complicated, we sometimes went and sometimes didn't as a family.

Skiing, Mountaineering, and Engineering

Lage: Did you go to UC Berkeley?

Hildebrand: Yes, I went to UC Berkeley, graduated there with a degree in physics. However, I took a certain amount of engineering along with it. First I should go back a minute. A little before I graduated from high school and before I started college, the family went to Europe for a year [1930]. My brothers and I went to school in Switzerland on top of a mountain. We had done some skiing before that, but that is where we really got started skiing.

Lage: Was skiing in California very widespread or popular?

Hildebrand: No, there was very little skiing done at that time in California. We had tried it out some, but my father had done more than the rest of us in connection with the Sierra Ski Club,* which at that time didn't tolerate women and children. But we did a lot of skiing at school in Switzerland because we were up in the mountain area. All

*See Joel Hildebrand, Sierra Club Leader and Ski Mountaineer, 1974.

Hildebrand: you had to do was step out the door and you were in the snow. We had a great time with that. Then with the Swiss school work and taking some entrance exams I got into college as soon as I came back. I was the California ski team. I was the only skier on the UC ski team for a year or two, and then it began to expand.

Lage: Your father was involved in coaching it, wasn't he?

Hildebrand: No, that was later on. When I was in college, I was on the ski team, but Dad was not involved in it. Then when I graduated, I went to work for Standard Oil Company of California, and my career with them lasted twenty-seven years. I worked in various capacities, first as a working engineer for refinery design, and later on I became assistant chief engineer of the Richmond Refinery. I also put in a spell during the war over in the Middle East in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf.

Lage: But still for Standard Oil?

Hildebrand: Still for Standard Oil. Later on, I was the manager of development research for an atomic energy project for four years that the company did at the request of the government. Then I went down and was manager and then director of oil field research in La Habra, near Whittier, for eight years. But we had purchased this farm [in Manteca, California] in 1944 and always planned that eventually we would retire here. We got a little tired of the smog and remoteness from our kind of civilization while we were down there and finally decided to take an early retirement and come up here and live on the farm while the children were still young enough to enjoy it.

Now, I skipped the fact that during the early post-war years, my brothers and I did quite a bit of mountaineering, sometimes just the three of us and sometimes with friends on summer trips that we went on.

Lage: What type of mountaineering was this, rock climbing?

Hildebrand: Not high tone rock climbing. We climbed all of the 14,000 foot peaks and a lot of others, mostly just climbing but not the kind of climbing where you've got to drive pitons and that sort of thing. We often rappelled down a mountain to get down faster, but I was never a fancy rock climber. Milt did somewhat more rock climbing than I did.

Then the war came along, and that's a period where part of the time I was out in the Persian Gulf and part of the time I was working as much as eighty hours a week for Standard to produce the special diesel oils that were needed for submarines and things of that sort. So there wasn't any time to speak of for mountaineering.

Hildebrand: I had joined the Sierra Club, I believe, in 1934, but was not very active until after the war. Then I spent a lot of time in the ski activities of the club and with Clair Tappaan Lodge, and at various times I was chairman of the winter sports committee, chairman of the Bay Chapter, chairman of the lodge committee, and a member of the conservation committee. So I was pretty active in that sort of club activity.

Lage: Did you go on any club outings?

Hildebrand: I never went on club outings. I intended to, as we planned, my wife and I and children, to go on one of the river trips on the Colorado while I was president. But something happened, I don't recall whether it was business.

Barbara

Hildebrand: You got transferred.

Hildebrand: I guess I got transferred just then. We had to move, so we didn't go. But I was, and my family, always very active in skiing. Barbara also skis very well. That's where I met her. I was skiing at the Sierra Club's Clair Tappaan Lodge. So we kept up with our skiing and mountain trips as much as our children and our babies and other obligations permitted.

Lage: How many children do you have?

Hildebrand: Three daughters.

Lage: Have your daughters stayed in the Sierra Club at all?

Hildebrand: No, they dropped it when we did.

Lage: Do they still ski and do outdoor---

Hildebrand: Only one of the daughters ever did much skiing. That was Janet, and she hasn't been just lately, but she has enjoyed skiing quite a bit. All of them have been on family mountain trips with us, but not so much in recent years.

Developing the Club's First Conservation Policy Guide

Hildebrand: During this period, from an activity point of view, I was primarily involved in the club's skiing activities. I also began to get interested in playing more of a role in the conservation aspects of the club.

Lage: Was there a connection there?

Hildebrand: I can't say that one led to the other. They just were both natural inclinations you might say. I think probably the family mountain trips did more to make me interested in the conservation side, as did the family atmosphere more than the skiing itself did.

It soon became apparent to me that the club, even at that time was growing to a degree that it was beginning to have a problem in being effective in conservation. It was no longer the situation that had existed earlier where the directors were all from the Bay Area, all knew each other, saw each other, and had a pretty common philosophy, so that there was no problem in coordinating the conservation policies. As the chapters became more important, and more people were trying to be effective in conservation, it became difficult because the board had always merely responded to specific problems in specific ways without any general policy and no recorded policy other than the minutes.

So it began to happen that the central people on the board were at times irritated because the chapters and committees would get involved in conservation matters in a manner that the board and staff people felt wasn't quite consistent with the club policy, and yet there wasn't a real defined club policy.

Lage: How early was this?

Hildebrand: This was about in the late forties; pretty late.

Lage: The chapters would be mainly the Angeles Chapter?

Hildebrand: It was mainly at that time the Angeles and Bay Chapters. Well, the chapters had some subdivisions--I forget now what they were called--in both north and south, so that although there were, I believe still only officially two chapters there were some subdivisions within the chapters.

Lage: I think there may have been other chapters at Riverside and maybe--

Hildebrand: Yes, I think perhaps Riverside, and there may have been two or three others by that time. [Loma Prieta, Mother Lode, San Diego, Atlantic]

Lage: Can you give the particular problems that arose?

Hildebrand: It's a little hard to go back and pick those up. Anyway, Barbara and I then undertook to begin by going back through all of the minutes of the board and picking out what appeared to be interpretable as policy decisions, or at least make a record of the decisions the club had made, say, relative to national forests and relative to other subjects and classify those and weed them out of all the internal affair decisions and things of that sort, so that there would be some written record that you could go back to as to what the club had done on similar issues. They still had no general policy to guide one in the future, except insofar as you could see what had been done in the past.

- Hildebrand: So we worked hard on that. Barbara put probably more time in on it than I did because she typed it all. So that was quite a project.
- Lage: Do you have a copy of that here?
- Hildebrand: No, I don't think so. I don't think we have that any more.
- Lage: I hope that's in The Bancroft Library. So that was the first policy guide [1952].
- Hildebrand: That was the first policy guide, yes.
- Lage: Was it developed so that the chapters or committees would have something to refer to?
- Hildebrand: Yes, that was the purpose of it.
- Lage: Did you find that things were consistent or were there--
- Hildebrand: Well, not a hundred percent but not too bad up to that time because, as I say, the members of the board, although there were often long discussions, they did end up agreeing on things pretty well. We didn't have any of this great split within the board, and there was more continuity. This idea that there should be a rapid turnover on the board came later, one which may have had some other merits, but due to lack of continuity it caused problems.

Volunteer Positions with the Sierra Club, 1946-1950s

- Lage: Let me just pick up a few things that you may have overlooked. You became a member of the board in '48 was it?*
- Hildebrand: Yes.
- Lage: Do you recall how that came about?
- Hildebrand: I was encouraged to run, I don't recall now by whom, but I decided I would.
- Lage: Did you view it as a major commitment, or how much time was involved with becoming a board member?
- Hildebrand: I don't think it involved a lot more time than I was already putting in committee activities, ski activities and other things.
- Lage: Do you remember when you were chapter chairman of the Bay Chapter?

*Hildebrand was a member of the board of directors 1948-1958 and 1963-1966.

Hildebrand: I don't recall the exact year, but it was not too long before I became a board member.

Lage: So in the late forties after the war?

Hildebrand: Probably the mid-forties at least, yes. It was after the war, yes.

Lage: As chairman of the lodge committee, were there particular things that you dealt with? How much responsibility did you have for the actual operation of these lodges?

Hildebrand: The lodge committee was responsible for seeing that we had custodians at the lodges and that the monetary affairs were taken care of and the maintenance of the buildings and so forth. It was more of an organizational housekeeping job than a conservation policy sort of job.

Lage: Did you work at all with the Forest Service there?

Hildebrand: Oh, not too much at that time, no.

Lage: Did you get involved with the conflict with the Southern California Chapter over the ski mountaineering lodges, or was that before they took over?

Hildebrand: There was some element of that at the time, but I don't feel that that was a major problem. The southern chapter tended to try to run its own show and not be part of the overall organization sometimes, but so far as the lodge was concerned, I didn't see any great harm in letting them pretty much run that lodge. The problem was to have somebody take charge of these things and run them, and there was no reason to make a big issue of the lodge committee's doing something other people were willing to do as long as they did it. So I didn't feel that was a big problem.

II THE SIERRA CLUB IN THE 1950s

Decisions for Growth

- Hildebrand: During the early years on the board, we continued to have a pretty good relationship. The club continued to grow and somewhere along in there, I guess probably the early fifties [1952], we decided we would have to have a full-time executive director. Dave Brower was appointed at first part-time and then full-time to that job, and then there had to be other staff people added as the thing grew.
- Lage: Do you recall that decision to take on an executive director? Did it just seem like a natural thing at the time or was it a controversial one?
- Hildebrand: Oh, I don't think it was really controversial. It did involve a great deal of discussion, really more as to whether we could afford it than anything else, I think. It amounted to a monetary commitment which at that time was still not too easy to foresee our capability of fulfilling. We had to work out then the duties of the executive director, and that started out very well. Dave is an extremely capable, creative person, very dedicated, a lot of fine qualities, a great deal of knowledge of the subject, a real professional conservationist.
- Lage: Are you putting us back in that time reference of '52?
- Hildebrand: Yes, back in the early fifties. As the financial affairs and club affairs expanded, then we began to have problems. It was partly due to Dave's feeling that he knew best what should be done about things--better than the board--and therefore, the board should follow him rather than otherwise. It seemed at times that he felt almost as though the board's function was to get the funds to do whatever he wanted to do.
- Lage: Was this even in the early fifties or do you think of the problems as coming in the sixties?



• Alex Hildebrand presiding over a Sierra Club Board of Directors meeting at Clair Tappaan Lodge, September 1956. From left: David Brower, executive director; Alex Hildebrand; Lewis Clark, secretary.



Hildebrand: It came along gradually. It was a process of evolution. At the time I was president,* things were still going pretty well, but the seeds were there. There were numerous times when Dave made commitments that were beyond his authority and with which the board was sort of stuck as a fait accompli, but they weren't too far out at that time. So there was a little tension, but it wasn't serious at that time.

Lage: When you were president, how did you see the president's role? What were your duties?

Hildebrand: The duties of the president are to be, as I see it, the chairman of the board and see that the club functions properly both as regards its efficient performance and as regards its adherence to policy and carrying things out in a proper manner.

Lage: Did the president oversee the day-to-day operation of the club, or did you--

Hildebrand: This was one of the problems. Since I was president when I was living in southern California, I couldn't oversee the day-to-day problems, and that gave Dave a rather free rein on those things, more than had I been up here.

Lage: Would he consult with you on them?

Hildebrand: That's where it began to be that I had to call him to see that things were done. He often had excuses for not getting around to doing what I wanted done because he was busy doing what he wanted done. There was beginning to be just an element--I wouldn't quite call it insubordination yet, but it was trending in that direction.

Let me make it clear at this point that while I may be critical of what Dave and perhaps other people did in the club, I bear no personal animosity. These are matters of principle and policy and one's opinions as to what are the proper ways to do things. People can differ on those matters so that I can have strong differences with people without its involving a personal animosity.

Lage: Had you been a companion with Dave? Did you do any mountaineering together?

Hildebrand: Some, yes. I had been on winter mountaineering trips with him a couple of times, I believe, and not a lot in the summer. But I had known Dave for years. Our whole family had. We liked him, and so our differences over how things should be done never involved any personal bitterness on our side. It involved a sadness, rather, that we had to have so much conflict.

Lage: I'm going to ask you one other thing. It seems as people look back now on what's happened to the club since the fifties, they look at these two decisions in the early fifties to hire the paid executive director and the second decision being to accept a chapter outside California--we already had the Atlantic Chapter, but accepting the Pacific Northwest Chapter outside California--as being sort of turning points. Now, at the time did they seem that way to you?

Hildebrand: In some degree, yes. As I say, the decision to hire an executive director was not done lightly. It was considered in great detail, and it was felt that the club was not going to refuse to grow and that it, therefore, couldn't function as it had in the past and therefore would have to have some paid management. Troubles arose that I wouldn't blame entirely on Dave either. Part of it was that the board had gradually ceased to carry out its functions properly, and this made it possible for Dave to do the things he did. So that either the board or Dave could have prevented it, but the combination was bad.

Lage: I think I recall from Dave Brower's interview--he mentions that you and Bestor Robinson would be the only ones who were really active in making motions.

Hildebrand: That tended to be the case. The board got to where they liked to talk endlessly and never decide anything. This, of course, frustrated Dave, as it did me and Bestor sometimes, and had something to do with his going ahead and doing things. So I don't feel that it was entirely Dave's fault. I think Dave failed to see the ultimate consequence that was bound to occur if he did that, unless the board in effect completely capitulated and became merely a money raising group. I think it was poor judgment to think that that was going to happen.

Now, you mention also the decision to expand geographically. That decision was also deliberated very carefully; a great deal of debate. I remember Bestor's cautioning that we would have to be careful that we weren't like the dinosaur whose body outgrew its brain. We recognized that there was some hazard there, but it was decided deliberately to expand geographically beyond California to include the wilderness areas of the entire United States.

Now, that was beginning to stretch the purposes of the club as indicated in its corporate bylaws. The later decision that I think caused a much greater change in the club and caused many of the management problems was when the club began to go into matters that went beyond the stated purposes of the club, quite clearly in my view. As long as I was associated with it, the board would never really face up to a decision on that--whether it should restrict itself in breadth of subject or whether to let the staff and other zealots in the club push out in other directions.

Lage: This wasn't a problem in the fifties, was it?

Hildebrand: No, that was beginning to happen more in the sixties, but I think that was a big part of the crisis that took place in the sixties.

There was still another aspect of it and that had to do with the means toward the ends. There were those in the club, including a few on the board by the time of the sixties, who felt that worthy ends justified unworthy means. While they might not have come right out and said they were unworthy means, that's what they did. Once you start that, after all, unworthy means can also lead to unworthy ends. The confrontation type of thing, the failure of the club to abide by its own commitments, things of that sort, began to occur.

Then, of course, there was the financial crisis which was again largely commitments made by Dave. But again, the board should have controlled him and didn't. So again, I don't want to lay all the blame on Dave.

Lage: I want to try to get back into the fifties a little more and then go to the sixties because I think the sixties did bring new problems.

Developing Policy on National Parks Roads Standards

Hildebrand: We did a lot of work in the fifties of trying to resolve better enunciated policy on various matters--the subject of national forest roads, national park roads, the classification system for national forests, and things of that sort. Some of us--myself, Bestor, Nate Clark, Harold Bradley, and others--began to see that we were having a great difficulty in achieving the kind of control of roads, for example, in parks and forest areas that we felt was necessary. This was the case, in our judgment, in considerable part because neither the club nor the Park Service had road standards that were precise enough. The roads would actually get built by the agencies in the government that are in the business of building roads, and they like nice roads. If you just talk in generalities, it doesn't stop that sort of thing. You have to get down to be very specific about it.

There was a lot of debate on the board because a lot of the board members didn't like being tied down to specifics, and they liked to talk in nice generalities. But it didn't work, and we did finally develop road standards. Harold Bradley also was very

Hildebrand: active in that. In this material I have here [Alexander Hildebrand papers, The Bancroft Library] you can see some of the correspondence that went on in developing those standards.*

So the club did ultimately develop what I believe to have been some pretty good standards in respect to roads and also in respect to forest classification systems.

Lage: Let's take the road standards for a minute. They were developed, it seems as I read about it, almost as if you were working for the Park Service in setting up a system that they could use.

Hildebrand: Yes, to a large extent that's true because we would have meetings with the director of the Park Service, for example, and as long as you talked in beautiful generalities we seemed to agree. But then the roads didn't get built that way.

Lage: Was the Tioga Road [Yosemite National Park] one of the things that motivated--

Hildebrand: That was one of the things that brought the matter to a head. The Tioga Road was built to a much higher standard than we felt was necessary, and I think was a good deal higher standard than the director of the Park Service really intended. But once he turned the building of the road over to the department that builds roads, and I forget now the proper name of that, it was sort of out of his hands. Because the Park Service had said merely that you may have these curvatures and grades and so forth and had not said that you must have them wherever higher road standards would damage the terrain, the road builders went right ahead and went for miles without any inflection of curvature or gradient to accomodate the terrain.

Now, it's true that the Park Service's instructions would have permitted the protection of the terrain to be better, but it didn't really require it to be better. So we had to work pretty hard. Now, I don't mean to say that the Park Service wanted the road as adapted to the terrain as the club did--but the difference in intent was not nearly as great as you would think by looking at the road.

*See also "Sierra Club Policy and Standards for National Park and Other Scenic Roads," Sierra Club Bulletin, December 1960.

Hildebrand: How effective those road standards have been, I don't know because I haven't been active in the club in more recent years. But I think we did do a good job there. It took a lot of time. Harold Bradley, Nate Clark, and one or two others and myself did most of the work on them, as I recall.

Lage: After the standards were developed, they were sent to the Park Service?

Hildebrand: Yes.

Lage: Was there follow-through?

Hildebrand: I'm not sure.

Lage: Do you think the Park Service welcomed them and gave them serious consideration or tucked them away?

Hildebrand: I don't think there were any critical roads built during the period after the standards were adopted and before I left the club, so I can't quite answer the question. They certainly got some attention, but how effective they were I don't really know. So far as I know, the club still has those same standards. I'm not aware of the club's having changed them, but I couldn't say for sure.

A similar thing happened relative to Forest Service classifications. Bestor again was one of the important people in working on that.*

Lage: And yourself also.

Hildebrand: Yes, he and I, and there were others involved. I don't mean to belittle others. But there was a lot of work done on that, and I think that was good work. I'm quite sure that that had an effect, that it did achieve something. I feel that that was a worthwhile thing.

A Changing Relationship with the Park and Forest Services

Lage: The thing that struck me, looking at it from today's perspective, was that it was almost preparation for a legislative campaign, the kinds of things that later might be put into legislation.

*See "Sierra Club Policy on National Forests," Sierra Club Bulletin, December 1960.

Hildebrand: Yes, that's right.

Lage: Yet your hope was that the Forest Service would---

Hildebrand: At that time, we were still trying to follow through on the kind of relationship that the club had had with the Park and Forest Service in earlier years where people who were members of the board of the Sierra Club were influential, but in their own right and not because they were board members, and they had personal rapport with the leaders of those organizations, and a great deal was accomplished by persuasion and cooperation rather than by confrontation. We were still having fair success of that nature at that time. It was becoming somewhat more difficult, partly because I think we had a less unified board. We had fewer members of prestige on the board. The government was also growing. It was less flexible. Bureaucracies get more regimented as they get bigger. So the change was partly on the government's side, partly on the club's side. But we were still endeavoring to work that way and were doing fairly well at it, I think, through the fifties, or mid-fifties at least.

Lage: Did you yourself have any personal relationships with any Forest Service officials or Park Service officials?

Hildebrand: Oh yes, on numerous times with [Conrad] Wirth when he was head of the Park Service. We had dealings with people in the Forest Service as well. The transition was taking place though where, because of the time involved, Dave was doing more and more of that and club officers were doing less. It's difficult to say to what extent this was the cause, and to what extent it was a change in the nature of government. It began to lead to its being more of a confrontation situation where the club was trying to influence things by its power rather than its persuasion and prestige. But the trend was taking place in the late fifties, there's no doubt about it.

Lage: Do you recall whether the agencies themselves were trying to influence the Sierra Club? The reason I say this is that in Dave Brower's interview, he says that both agencies at different times tried to have the club discharge him, that the confrontation had been to such an extent that they lobbied the club to get rid of Dave. Do you recall that?

Hildebrand: I think there was a little of that, but not as much as I believe Dave thought. I didn't think it was true to the extent Dave thought it was true. There was beginning to be, about the end of my presidency, situations where Dave got pretty abrasive on some things and was beginning this business of not disagreeing intellectually and objectively, but making devils and impugning people's motives and things of that sort, and that, of course, irritated those people. So he became personally somewhat of a thorn in the side of some of

Hildebrand: them, and they did make some effort to either find out whether there was a schism between Dave and the board, or create it perhaps. I don't know. While I was president, I resisted that strongly because I felt the club would be greatly weakened if it ever acknowledged its schism. There were several times when I backed Dave when I didn't really think he had done things right because the alternative was to destroy his effectiveness in any manner other than a confrontational manner.

Lage: Do you recall those instances, what were they over?

Hildebrand: One of them had to do, I think, with [pause] the Tioga Road and a couple of others. I think you'll find some correspondence in some of this material [now at the Bancroft] that refers to some of those instances.

Lage: One that he mentions is the Oregon Cascades. I guess he proposed that a national park be created, and the Forest Service was quite upset about that.

Hildebrand: I don't recall the details of that, but I do recall that there was such a problem. Dave and I do have different concepts of how things should be accomplished, and this was beginning to cause a little tension between us--not exactly on a personal basis but in terms of our relationships, with me as president and Dave as executive director while I was still president.

Lage: I think that's interesting. You bring out that the fifties really were a transition period as far as the club's relationship to the federal agencies.

Hildebrand: Yes.

Water Power vs. Scenic Resources in Dinosaur and Glen Canyon

Lage: I want to go back a little bit and talk about Dinosaur. Were you involved in the decision for the club to make this a campaign [to prevent dams in the Dinosaur National Monument]?

Hildebrand: Yes, if I remember correctly, I was at least on the board. I don't remember the exact timing of that.

Lage: I think it was about '52, so you were on the board.

Hildebrand: Yes, I think I was. I certainly agreed with that decision, and we fought it effectively and were successful in that. Now, that was a battle with the Bureau of Reclamation primarily, and I don't think the club ever really did have a good rapport with the Bureau of Reclamation. The Bureau was in the business of building dams

- Hildebrand: wherever you could build dams. The club I think rightly--I still think rightly--is adamantly opposed to the building of any dam in a national park or monument because that would set a devastating precedent, and it didn't seem justified to do that.
- Lage: Do you recall the decision that was made towards the end of the battle over Dinosaur, that the club wouldn't extend the campaign to protect Glen Canyon. I think you were president at the time.
- Hildebrand: Yes, I believe I was. I've always felt that the world isn't black or white. There are shades of grey. You have to have compromises. The merit is rarely all on one side even though some people like to pretend it is. The case for building Glen was much better than the case for building Dinosaur. The case against Glen didn't involve existing national parks or monuments or likely ones other than--what do you call that little monument that has the stone arch in it?
- Lage: Rainbow Bridge.
- Hildebrand: Rainbow Bridge, yes. Now, we did get a commitment which the government did not honor, and that was a bitter pill. That was that they would put in a protective dam to keep water out of the Rainbow Bridge Monument. That was, as I recall, in the authorization, but then it was never funded, and the dam was never built.
- Lage: I think they are still struggling over that.
- Hildebrand: That may be. I think that was dirty pool. I think Congress made a commitment, and they didn't abide by it. On the other hand, although I felt pretty incensed about it at the time, I think the club is in a lot poorer position to be incensed about it now because the club has done the same thing in more recent years. They have made commitments and then not abided by them. They have gained what they wanted and then they reneged. If the club does that, they can't object when the government does it, and that's what happened in that case.
- Lage: Okay, we're going to get to some of those. I did notice though, after the Glen Canyon decision, you developed a water resources policy, where you opposed sacrificing scenic areas, whether dedicated or not, for water power. [approved by the board, January 19, 1957]
- Hildebrand: That's right, and there again I think it was a good policy. I think it would still be a good policy, but the club itself has kind of negated it because the policy said that--I can't quote it exactly--but that no important scenic resource should be destroyed for the sake of power alone. But it said that the reason for that was that power was available and would be for the foreseeable future from other sources and specifically mentioned gas, coal, oil, and

Hildebrand: nuclear. Now the club has objected to nuclear plants in general no matter where they are, which I think is beyond the club's proper scope in the first place, and has objected to practically any kind of major power generation by any means. Now, by doing that they have put great pressure on hydropower. It is a non-polluting, renewable source. It does get us away from OPEC oil problems. So by objecting to nuclear power particularly and to coal plants--and there are some problems still to be resolved with coal plants in my opinion--they put great pressure on hydropower.

I think they are plagued with this right now on the Upper Tuolumne. It would be very unfortunate in my opinion to put in a dam that is essentially for power only in the Upper Tuolumne, which is a very scenic area, but the pressure to put those dams in has been greatly increased by the club and others who won't let them run the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant. So it's difficult to object to the violation of that policy when the club itself is violating it by not permitting these other sources of power to be utilized.

III GROWING INTERNAL PROBLEMS IN THE CLUB, 1957-1966

Finances and Control of Personnel

- Lage: I want to follow up on a couple of things we mentioned. I don't know if you recall this, but in looking over the minutes of those periods in the late fifties, it seems to me there are inordinately long executive committee meetings and then very short minutes or a brief of actions. Some of the minutes referred to the Forest Service and forest policy and some to trying to control the club's financial condition. Do you remember that?
- Hildebrand: Yes, I remember that. I think it happened for two reasons. That was a period of time--because you are talking about this period in the late fifties and in the early sixties.
- Lage: Yes, you were off the board, I guess.
- Hildebrand: I was off the board. However, the problems were becoming great then--financial problems, the control of publications, the control of the executive director, and these confrontations were getting started. So some of these were rather touchy things to handle in public meetings where you had the members of the press and other people there. There was a great desire to work these out by persuasion and discussion and not to air our dirty linen in public and our problems in public. Then this matter of confrontation with government people, rather than getting along with them, was involved.
- So because they sort of involved personnel problems, it did take a lot of time, and it didn't seem appropriate to air them publicly. Also, if I remember rightly, Lewis Clark was secretary during that period, bless him, and Lewis had a little trouble getting around to writing the minutes sometimes. So we often had a brief of actions and by the time the minutes were written, they were pretty brief, too. [laughs]

- Lage: Sometimes they weren't written at all.
- Hildebrand: Yes, but I love Lewis, and I don't mean to sound critical. I think they were adequate for the purpose of the time, anyway. But it was a bit of a problem sometimes, that the minutes didn't get out before the next meeting, and we had a little trouble having everybody remember what happened before.
- Lage: So they were official meetings, but not as public as the other meetings.
- Hildebrand: Our executive committee meetings were not really held as public meetings as a matter of practice. I suppose if somebody had demanded to be present he could have, but it didn't happen. So ordinarily it was just the executive committee and Dave and maybe one or two other people and staff or something of that sort. At those meetings where we got into these matters of personnel and the grave problems of Dave and others making commitments of many, many thousands of dollars for the club, with no authority to do it, things of that sort--
- Lage: What kinds of things were those in the late fifties? I always think of them as coming in the sixties.
- Hildebrand: Well, that was during this period when I was off the board. I was frequently asked by the presidents during that period to attend the executive committee meetings and try to help with these problems, which I did. I didn't attend them all, but I did attend a good many.
- Lage: So these were sort of working sessions to try to--
- Hildebrand: Yes, the things just were getting worse and worse and worse during that period as regards financial responsibility, lack of control of publications, confrontation approaches, that sort of thing.
- Lage: So there were several areas--publications, finances and tactics.
- Hildebrand: Yes, and the organization, which involved these other things.
- Lage: At one time I think I noticed mentioned in the minutes that you urged Dave to accept the idea of having an administrator.
- Hildebrand: Yes, one of the problems, and by no means the only problem, was that Dave's great abilities had to do with his role in connection with publications and sort of the selling of conservation you might say. That was his big interest, and he didn't do an adequate job of taking care of these other things. It was really too big a job for one person to handle. If you had somebody do it under Dave's direction, Dave wasn't one to delegate, and so it wouldn't get done that way either. He would always want to wait and look at it first.

Hildebrand: So it was obvious that in order to continue to use Dave's abilities, which we still hoped to do at that time, it would be necessary to have the office management and financial management shifted to other shoulders that reported directly to the president.

Lage: So you favored having this dual system of reporting.

Hildebrand: Yes. Dave didn't want to do that. He wanted to be the boss of everything, but it wasn't working, and it wasn't going to work. Some people can do that sort of thing and some can't, and Dave's talents weren't in that direction. It wasn't his basic interest. He was interested in having the control, but he wasn't really interested in carrying out the more mundane things that have to be done. Particularly as the club's financial affairs were approaching bankruptcy, something had to be done. I was instrumental in persuading Dave to accept that change. I don't think he ever really fully accepted it, but he did accept it to a sufficient extent that an office manager could be hired and could take care of some of these things.

Lage: You had an interest in a proposal in 1960 where you had quite a lengthy idea for better control over club operations. Do you recall that?

Hildebrand: I don't remember all the details, but I recall that was done, yes.

Lage: Did you think at the time or do you think now that the problems the club faced were solely a problem with Brower? Was it also a problem with the growth of the club coming so fast?

Hildebrand: Yes, as I said earlier, a person with Brower's tendencies only gets out of hand if you let it. But he was permitted to do it. The club didn't control him. Now, he didn't want to be controlled, it's true, and it was very difficult to control him. But the board was not sufficiently unified itself, and it had some members who practically idolized Dave so they couldn't come to grips with forcing Dave to make a change. They would plead with him to do it, but he wouldn't on that basis, and they weren't willing to come to grips with the fact that the longer they put it off, the worse the crisis was going to be, and that's what then happened. Whether Dave could have been controlled, so that his talents could have been kept in the club, is hard to say. But the way things were done, I think it was only almost inevitable that it would end up as it did.

An example of that which ran through this period of time was the attempt to control the public statements. I have some correspondence referring to that here. I believe that the board did ultimately adopt some sort of a resolution on it--I don't recall exactly what it was--to reduce the amount of confrontation, the amount of inuendo and impugning motives and things of that sort in their dealings with people outside of the club and particularly government officials.

Hildebrand: But it was very, very difficult to get the board to come to grips with something like that.

Lage: Was there sort of a philosophical difference? It seems like in the discussion of the board minutes that there was.

Hildebrand: Oh yes, that's right, and that's why I say had the board been of a unified mind I think they could have controlled the situation, but they weren't. There were members of the board who also believed that the ends justified the means, and who kind of liked confrontation, and who didn't really think that the club ought to stick by prior commitments if new members of the board felt otherwise and if reasons for compromising in the first place had been taken care of. They got what they wanted, so to speak.

Then there were those who just had no concept of organization. So they didn't understand that you can't run a big show like that in a proper and coordinated and consistent manner if you don't have some rules and regulations. They didn't like rules and regulations. The rules might bother you some time or other from doing what you wanted to do.

So there was a great resistance to being specific about things. A great deal of it was because of a difference of opinion, but also some of it was because people just didn't like to tie themselves down, and some of them were exceedingly reluctant to pass any resolution that Dave didn't like. And Dave, of course, didn't want to be tied down.

Lage: I think of this happening say when Fred Eissler came on the board and Martin Litton [1963-64]. Did it also happen before?

Hildebrand: It got much worse about that time! [laughs] Much worse. Now, we did have another thing that got us into some of our financial trouble, or contributed to getting us into our financial trouble.

Publications Policy

Hildebrand: We had at least one member of the board who was quick to vote either on the board or on the publication committee for the club's expending of vast sums of money on publications from which he then would draw a royalty. The conflict of interest didn't bother him a bit.

Lage: You're talking about Eliot Porter.

Hildebrand: Yes, and the rest of the board wouldn't face up to the fact that there was a conflict of interest there.

Lage: Was that discussed?

Hildebrand: The presidents that we had a good deal of the time were nice people who just didn't like to have discussions on really tough, controversial matters, and they would avoid it. For example, in 1965 when things were about at their last crunch, it seemed to me that there was no hope unless we could have a publications policy that said that you don't publish articles that are way beyond the scope of the club, and that say something about the tone of the publication. So we wouldn't have the kind of stuff that is in--Let me look here. [goes through papers]

For example, this Sierra Club Bulletin of September '71--well, that was even later--ridiculed people. You indicated that anybody that was on the other side of an issue was a monster and so forth, that kind of thing.

Lage: It has a cartoon for a cover.

Hildebrand: Whole classes of people were shown to be no-good bums. To try to head that off I tried to get a publication policy. You can see from the correspondence in here, I spent a lot of time on it and so did other people who worked with me on it. We proposed a policy--Will Siri was president at the time--and he just would not let that come to a discussion on the board. He did not want publications policy discussed by the board because it would be a big commotion.

Lage: Did it have to do with the scope of publications or with the idea of the director getting royalties?

Hildebrand: Well, this didn't deal exactly with the aspect of royalties. This had to do with what was proper content. The letter I have here which was the culmination of a lot of effort was dated June 20, 1965, to Siri. It explained the need for a policy, the scope of what seemed to be needed in policy, the considerations that should be weighed in establishing a definition of proper scope, and the tone and standards of accuracy, and then the recommended policy itself, fairly brief. [Alexander Hildebrand papers, The Bancroft Library]

Lage: Did this have to do with the books or the Bulletin or both?

Hildebrand: Both; this had to do with the Bulletin more than the books even, but both. Will first refused to put it on a board agenda. Once or twice at my insistence, he put it on. After all, I was a board member, and it was a little awkward for the president not to put something on the agenda that one of the members was very insistent about, but then he would relegate it to the end of the meeting, and then announce that there wasn't time. So he never let it come to a discussion.

Lage: He didn't mind controversy on other issues, I thought.

Hildebrand: He didn't like controversy generally. He knew this would be controversial, and he wouldn't face up to it. Now, that was a big part of our crisis problem, that the board as a whole and some of the presidents we had--this was true also to some extent of Wayburn--didn't like internal controversy.

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Hildebrand: The failure to settle these problems and get a unified board policy just fed into the hands of what happened--of people taking the law unto themselves, doing as they saw fit, without board authorization. They didn't give Dave guidance, for example, and even though I think it was pretty clear that a majority of the board disapproved, there were enough of those who disapproved that did not want a confrontation that they didn't do anything about it.

Lage: Was this because of their admiration for Dave, primarily?

Hildebrand: For some of them, this was a major consideration. He was a very able man, there was no question about it--or is. (I shouldn't say was.)

Lage: They were afraid of losing him?

Hildebrand: Some of them felt that Dave was so valuable that it was better to let these things happen than to lose Dave. By not controlling the situation earlier, it had reached the point, considering Dave's reluctance to be controlled, that you pretty well either had to let Dave do whatever he wanted and just finance him, or you had to get rid of him, and there was a great reluctance. All of us were reluctant to get rid of him, but some of us could see that there was no other choice. If the club wouldn't control him, they would have to get rid of him and have somebody who was easier to control. It was very much too bad.

Defining the Club's Scope and Acceptable Conservation Tactics

Lage: You spoke about the scope of problems. Maybe this is the time to get into that now. This is what your concern was on the publications policy, that the club was getting into issues that it shouldn't. What did you feel was beyond its scope?

Hildebrand: Oh, a lot of things. The club bylaws define the purposes of the club. They are the scientific, literary and educational studies concerning the Sierra Nevada and other scenic resources of the United States and its forests, waters, wildlife, and wilderness.

Hildebrand: Now, that doesn't really get you into the question of should you have nuclear energy. It doesn't get you into the question of urban amenities.

Lage: Those weren't raised that early, were they?

Hildebrand: Yes, they were beginning to be. So the zealots in the club were starting to branch out into things that were to my mind clearly beyond the authorized purposes of the club and the bylaws. So one of the questions was, is the board going to permit this, and if they are, shouldn't they change the bylaws? I didn't think they should expand the scope because you can't be all-wise on everything. If you start branching into things where you are not knowledgeable you are going to do silly things, and I think the club has done silly things. It got into pesticides.

Lage: Was pesticides one of the motivating things here?

Hildebrand: Yes, that was one of the things. The club started out considering the use of pesticides and herbicides, in the park areas. That, I think, was legitimate. But then when they started expanding it to the use of pesticides on the farms and other things, that was getting clearly beyond the scope of the club in my judgment. Whether the cause was worthy or not isn't the question. It's a question of can a club be effective if it tries to address all of the problems of society? It seems to me clearly the answer is no. When the club has gone off, or allowed its representatives to go off, into these other areas, they have often made some very technical and from a professional point of view, what are asinine statements.

Lage: Have they relied on technical expertise?

Hildebrand: They have tended not to. There was a feeling that grew among some of the people in the club, sort of like Jerry Brown's feeling, that you can't have an expert on any committee of this sort, even a club committee, because he is going to be biased. So therefore, you must have somebody who doesn't know anything about it. That's the way to avoid bias. Well, that's also a good way to do things that are very foolish. The club was beginning to do those things.

Lage: Would you say this is something that got more extreme after Brower left, in the seventies? I guess you haven't followed it.

Hildebrand: No, I haven't followed it as closely but I don't know that it could have gotten much worse than it was by the time Brower left. It certainly was happening to very substantial degrees.

So a thrust of the publication policy I proposed was that you should stay within the purposes of the club, but the interpretation of what constituted staying within the purpose of the club was spelled out to some degree. Then there was the question of should

Hildebrand: the Bulletin be used, as it was being used, as a propaganda document? Or should the Bulletin be considered a communication with the club's membership, and you should not tell your membership what to think. You should let them hear both sides and get some feedback from them. The Bulletin was certainly not doing that at that time. It really didn't cover both sides of issues, and, as I said earlier, very few things are such that the right is all on one side or all on the other side.

The club must consider, in my opinion, the merits of the opposition's position, at least in the publication that goes out to its own membership. So that was a factor.

Then the tone and standards of accuracy [were factors], and whether you stay away from this business of using unworthy means towards worthy ends or whether you permit that. It seems to me that is a very bad thing to do, and there were other members of the board who felt so. Most of the people who felt that way ended up getting off the board because you couldn't get the club to face up to it.

Lage: The other aspect that you seem to bring up is the emotional argument versus an objective argument.

Hildebrand: Yes.

Lage: Is that something that the board was divided on?

Hildebrand: Yes. Of course, aesthetic things are in some degree emotional, I suppose. You can't entirely get away from that. But on the other hand, you mustn't get emotional or shouldn't get emotional, in my opinion, in such a way that you are unwilling to recognize that reasonable people can have different opinions about things and that there are trade-offs. When you preserve something, you then prevent its being used for something else, and sometimes the need for something else gets pretty impelling. This kind of attitude, I think, is the sort of thing that has resulted in the club's inadvertently creating pressure to build dams in the Upper Tuolomne because it is not willing to accept the trade-offs of letting them build other kinds of power plants in other places.

So by approaching things in an emotional manner that says, "Let's be absolutely pure and never compromise anything," and expanding the scope to practically anything it wants to address, you get into this sort of a mess.

- Hildebrand: I have somewhere in here a letter that I wrote to Mike McCloskey in '66 where the club was getting involved in urban amenities.* Well, that's getting pretty much on the fringe of a desirable club scope, in my opinion.
- Lage: I guess I hadn't realized that that came so early.
- Hildebrand: It was just beginning.
- Lage: Was it mainly a staff effort or was this sponsored by some of the volunteers?
- Hildebrand: Oh, both, both. But what was happening during this period was that without any considered decision to do so, the club was gradually expanding its scope beyond the scope that is covered in the bylaws. By doing it without any considered judgment, it was not facing up to the consequences of doing so; consequences in terms of the club's effectiveness, consequences in terms of running into conflicts in its own objectives such as I mentioned in the power dam business. If they ever have faced up to these things I'm not aware of it, but I don't really know what's happened since the late sixties.
- Lage: Nuclear power hadn't become an issue by the time you left the board in '66, had it?
- Hildebrand: No, that happened later.
- Lage: Do you recall in 1959 the board passed the motion, which you must have been somewhat instrumental in, which put limits on criticism of public officials by club spokesmen?*
- Hildebrand: Yes, that's one that I mentioned that controlled public statements. I was instrumental in that.
- Lage: Everybody seemed to agree to that. I think it was unanimous.
- Hildebrand: They agreed to it, but they didn't follow it.
- Lage: But nobody opposed it?

*See Appendix, page 55.

*See Sierra Club Board Minutes, December 5, 1959.

- Hildebrand: Well, that went through pretty well because people voting on it didn't really think it was going to affect themselves, I guess. At that point in time, people weren't prepared to say that they really sought confrontation and this sort of thing. But when we came to trying to face up to the same kind of problems in connection with publication policy, in '65, I couldn't get anything done anymore.
- Lage: That same 1959 resolution forbid club publications to urge members to write their legislators about pending legislation. Was that a major problem?
- Hildebrand: I don't think it had been a major problem at that time, but it looked to me as though it was going to be if we didn't watch out.
- Lage: Was it mainly the tax situation [retention of the club's tax deductible status] that you were concerned about?
- Hildebrand: That was one of the reasons that one passed was because people were worried about the tax situation.
- Lage: But that wasn't your concern?
- Hildebrand: I didn't consider it the major concern myself. I felt that it was one of these things where they were getting off into areas that were going to cause problems for the club and cause us to be less effective. It's pretty hard to get into those things without beginning to become partisan, and when you start to become partisan, you've got problems in a big organization.
- Lage: You didn't think the club should use its "people power" to try to influence legislation?
- Hildebrand: Well, that's a little too broad a statement--to influence the election of individual people. To influence legislation such as whether or not to build the Peripheral Canal, that's something else. but so far as the election of people is concerned, no, I don't think they should. There is no way you can do that without getting into partisan things, and personally, I don't like to see people decide to elect or oppose a candidate on the basis of one issue. A legislator or a congressman has to vote on many things from defense to dams to nuclear plants, all sorts of things, and the world isn't just so simple that you can expect to agree with anybody on everything. So I don't think you should decide to oppose a person on a single issue unless it is a very important issue.
- Lage: All of the oldtimers in the club that I've talked to say that politics never came up on the board, that what political affiliation a member had was never at issue.

Hildebrand: That's right, it never was.

Lage: Did you see or did others see one party as being more friendly to conservation?

Hildebrand: That was beginning to happen. Some of the front people for the club thought that they had a better rapport with the Democrats than with Republicans. So there was beginning to be an element of that. It wasn't ordinarily ever stated that way, but statistically that was what was happening. Whether that was a valid opinion or not was a matter of judgment. I think that it was influenced a little bit by some people just having personal connections or rapport of one kind or another.

Lage: But you yourself didn't see it as the Democrats being more favorable--

Hildebrand: I didn't care. As a Sierra Club officer I didn't care whether there was one party or the other. It was how we were able to work with them on matters that were within the proper scope of the club that seemed to me important, and I looked on that on an individual basis.

Efforts Toward More Representational Leadership

Lage: You were off the board from '57 to '63. Was there a reason for your not continuing with it then?

Hildebrand: Yes, it was partly personal, that I didn't want to put in quite that much time, although in the end I don't know that I put in a lot less! [laughs]

Lage: It sounds like you were very involved.

Hildebrand: However, I was also influenced by the fact that there was beginning to be a great deal of agitation in the club for more rapid turnover on the board. I felt that it was not wise to have a requirement in the bylaws that you could serve only so many terms because I thought that it had been of extreme value to have some people carry on for long periods of time just as Colby did and Dick Leonard and Lewis Clark. I didn't want to see them put off just on the basis that they had been there too many years.

On the other hand, there is some legitimacy to the idea that times change, and you should have some turnover. So I thought one way to head off the club's adopting a limited term requirement would be to generate a little more turnover voluntarily. So this was a substantial factor in my dropping off.

Lage: Not too many followed suit though.

Hildebrand: Not too many. However, the turnover on the board was more than people who were worried about this acknowledged, I think. There perhaps hadn't been, oh, back in the pre-war days, but there was really quite a bit of turnover by the late fifties and sixties.

Lage: It was interesting to me, to get back to the fifties--in '54 I think I noted that you put forth a policy that included limited tenure for the board members and staggered terms. It included four things that have since occurred, but it took a long time-- the council and regional committees.

Hildebrand: I don't remember that I espoused a limited term. Maybe I did.

Lage: It was in there [the board of directors minutes]. Now, it didn't look like you followed through on it. It said staggered three to five-year terms, limited tenure, regional representatives, and creation of--

Hildebrand: Was this something to be considered because of the pressure from the membership or something that I promoted? I don't recall promoting it.

Lage: You proposed it. That was the way it was termed in the minutes [May 1954]. That's all I have from it.

Hildebrand: I think I put it forth for discussion because of the desire, the pressure, that was beginning to be felt by the chapters and the membership to do so. I don't recall that I actually favored a mandatory limit on terms.

Lage: That was twenty years in coming. I think it came in 1970.

Hildebrand: I think we just discussed it at that time [1954].

Lage: What about the idea for regional representatives? That seemed very farsighted.

Hildebrand: That I thought should happen. I did urge that because I felt that, since we were growing geographically, that you did have to have some element of regional representation in principle. Now, just how it should be worked out was a problem and how you have regional representation without having people then represent regions rather than represent the club, so to speak. This is a problem whether it's a school board or something else. There are pros and cons to it. But in order not to have the club shatter a bit just from lack of cohesion, it did seem necessary to do something about this. Now, the council was developed, I guess, about that time, as a somewhat different solution to that problem, and I think it helped.

Lage: Were you thinking of volunteers appointed as regional representatives?

Hildebrand: I don't remember now just what we did. But they were trial balloons that we were just exploring.

Lage: Nothing seems to have come of it at that time?

Hildebrand: No, we were just exploring ideas of how we would handle the growth of the club geographically as well as in membership and avoid getting into where it was just a home office clique trying to spend the money they collected from a whole lot of members. It is a difficult problem, and there are no perfect answers to it. So we did explore different alternatives and, as I recall, the first thing we did of consequence was to set up the council, and I think that did help quite a bit.

Lage: Can you remember where the initial suggestion for that came from?

Hildebrand: There was a lot of agitation among the chapter people to maybe have a board member from each chapter, and this sort of thing. The trouble with doing it that way was partly that there was some tendency in at least some chapters--it varied from chapter to chapter--for the chairman of the chapter to be a social club chairman, so to speak, and maybe not even very much interested in the broader interests of the club. That wasn't true of all the chapters. The Pacific Northwest Chapter was a very pro-conservation chapter. But perhaps the other extreme for a while was the Southern [Angeles] chapter.

But there was a lot of pressure about that, and that's why the problem had to be examined. So it is a real problem, and the question is how do you resolve it? You have to weigh the pros and cons of different things. I can't recall for certain, but I think that what you're referring to is merely exploratory discussion, and you have to bring up ideas and talk about them to decide whether they are good or bad. I think I just brought up the general subject, that these were things that had been suggested, perhaps by others, I don't know, and we kicked them around.

Lage: [laughs] They're still kicking them around!

Hildebrand: Yes.

Lage: They've done most all of these things, but I think people still try to deal with these same problems.

Hildebrand: Yes, they are problems that won't go away. There are no perfect answers.

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Lage: After being off the board for six years, why did you happen to return in '63?

Hildebrand: Because Dick Leonard and several other people pled with me to come back on because the club was going down the drain and needed help and backing to get things under control. I did so rather reluctantly, but I succumbed to, I suppose, the flattery of their thinking I could do some good. I went back on for a term and then saw it was hopeless and got off.

Lage: Did you have a certain plan in mind when you came on?

Hildebrand: Well, to try to get the club to face up to having some proper policies on publications, finances, organization, and so forth. These things seemed to be in a great state of disarray at the time. But I guess I didn't fully appreciate the hopelessness of doing that with the membership we then had on the board and with the reluctance of the presidents at that time to even discuss issues like publications. Will Siri, as I told you, was totally unwilling to have any discussion of publication policy because it would be a vehement discussion.

Lage: But he got pretty vehement himself discussing Diablo Canyon.

Hildebrand: I guess it depends on your point of view as to which things you think are worth it.

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IV TROUBLESOME CONSERVATION ISSUES OF THE 1960s

The Diablo Canyon Controversy: a Question of Credibility
and Realism

Lage: We were going to talk about the issue of the siting of power plants and particularly Diablo Canyon. Do you want to give some background on that?

Hildebrand: The siting of power plants, of course, was properly discussed as it related to the siting of power plants in areas of scenic importance. I don't recall the details of the early discussions on that. But there was certainly nothing improper about it. Then the Pacific Gas & Electric Company had a proposal to put a nuclear plant in some dunes. I forget now the--

Lage: The Nipomo Dunes.

Hildebrand: The Nipomo Dunes, yes. Although that was not a protected area, those members of the club and the board who were familiar with the area felt that it was valuable scenically and should be preserved and that there should not be a power plant there.

So there was negotiation between the club and PG&E which resulted in PG&E's agreeing that they would drop the Nipomo Dunes proposal and substitute the Diablo Canyon proposal. The club agreed that that would be acceptable. They would accept the Diablo Canyon site. So the change was made. The dunes were protected, and then the club turned around and objected to the Diablo Canyon site, which they had previously agreed to.

Lage: Were you there on the vote?

Hildebrand: Yes, and this was, in my opinion, one of the serious cases where the club went back on its word and once it got what it wanted, just repudiated the deal it had made. I think it was one of a number of instances that was very damaging to the club's credibility and

Hildebrand: ability to negotiate because once you start going back on your word, people can't trust you anymore. Initially, it was primarily based on, I believe, Martin Litton's making a big issue that he thought Diablo Canyon itself ought to be saved. It didn't bother him a bit that the club had already agreed not to protest that.

At that time, the fact that it was a nuclear plant was not a big issue. But then, of course, later on the club began to oppose nuclear plants in general, which seems to me beyond the scope of the club and highly inappropriate for that reason. But in the case of the Diablo Canyon, it was inappropriate anyway, to go back on the agreement that had been made--whether it was right or wrong. It had been made.

Lage: Some people say that the club shouldn't get involved in choosing alternatives. That they should just oppose Nipomo Dunes without coming up with an alternative site.

Hildebrand: That, of course, is a purist point of view--that you can protest anything without seeing how the problem is going to be solved. You don't ever have to worry about the solution of the problem, only to create the problem. But, as a matter of realism, the population of California is continuing to grow. The demographers indicate it will for quite some time yet, and even with some decrease in the use of energy per capita, the total use of energy is going to grow. There is no question about it. So one has to be realistic, and just as people have to eat, they also have to have a certain amount of energy. It's going to have to be generated some place. So it's unrealistic to just deny every opportunity to generate energy. You have to decide what is the best trade-off where you can generate this energy with the least damage.

To talk about generating large quantities of electric power with solar energy is just naivete. It makes no sense at all in the present state of technology, and may never. Solar energy, of course, has a place, but not for a long time at least in connection with electric power generation. So I think that by failing to face up to this fact that energy does have to be generated, the club has got itself into the kinds of binds that I mentioned earlier where now they are in a poor position to oppose power plants on the Tuolumne River.

Any place you build something, just on a vacant lot, you are going to destroy some kind of ecology. So you can't realistically be totally pure. All of these people who object to these things are living in houses that were built on what was once primitive land. They object to the harvest of lumber, but they live in houses that are built out of lumber. They are just unrealistic. They object to farming and the use of pesticides and so forth, but they are eating food that is supplied to them by that means. So I think

- Hildebrand: it was a very wrong thing to go back on the word of the club relative to the Diablo Canyon site, and I also believe that it is totally unrealistic to assume that you are not going to let them build power plants any place.
- Lage: On the Diablo Canyon matter, did you try to convince the board members on the other side with these arguments? How did you find the communication between--
- Hildebrand: At that point in time, the board was just seriously divided, both as to whether there need be any honor on the part of the club and as to whether you had to worry about permitting a generation of power some place.
- Lage: I guess I'm trying to get a contrast between the board of this era of the mid-sixties, with the earlier board. Were you as able to have an exchange of views?
- Hildebrand: No, by that time it had gotten to where the philosophy, the ideas of a proper manner of promoting one's ends, was widely divergent among different members of the club. It was still combined also with this fact of having some members who don't really like to face up to issues.
- Lage: So you didn't feel that you could ever have a good discussion of the matter?
- Hildebrand: No, there was no possibility at that point in time of getting anything approaching a unanimous decision of the board in either direction.
- Lage: One thing that struck me was that the Diablo Canyon decision that they made, and I guess you agreed with, was in opposition to the power plant policy that you had proposed. In 1963 you had a resolution against siting power plants on the coastal regions or bays, I think it was.* Then Diablo Canyon came along. It seemed to be in conflict.
- Hildebrand: I don't recall just how the earlier one was worded. I'm not aware that we had a policy that said there should be no coastal sites. I think it was related to the idea of coastal sites of prime scenic value. At the time of the deal that was made with PG&E, the feeling was that plants did have to be built some place and that the dunes

*September 7/8, 1963. "Sierra Club opposes construction of power plants along ocean or national lake shorelines of high recreational or scenic values." (Board of Directors minutes)

Hildebrand: were far more important than Diablo Canyon, and there are, after all, a rather limited number of locations that would be suitable for a nuclear power plant. So if you accept the idea that you are going to have to build something some place, Diablo Canyon didn't seem like a bad choice. Now, if you take the point of view that you don't have to build any power plants, that the power companies are all a bunch of villains, even if we use their power, then you can decide to oppose every site.

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Mineral King Ski Development, Another Policy Reversal

Lage: Let's turn to Mineral King now. Tell me about the roots of the club's original policy on Mineral King. I think it was 1947 to 1949.

Hildebrand: Yes, I think I was either on or chairman of the winter sports committee at that time. The winter sports committee, with the backing of the club as I recall, decided that we were entering a period where the growth of skiing was very rapid, and the locations for major ski resorts were inadequate to meet the need, and that the club could serve a useful purpose by helping to locate areas that would be suitable for ski resorts and to promote their use. An aerial reconnaissance was made of the Sierra sites that might be considered.

Lage: Who did that aerial reconnaissance? Was it a private plane?

Hildebrand: It was largely done by a private plane of a member of the committee, if I remember rightly. I don't recall now who it was. I think Bestor Robinson was one of those who rode in the plane, and they took pictures. It was studied rather carefully.

There weren't a lot of places that weren't in parks; we didn't want to promote it in parks. There weren't a lot of places that have sufficient area, slopes facing in the direction where the snow would lie, and otherwise suitable. Mineral King was picked as one of the better sites just in terms of the availability of snow, and the fact that it was not in a park. There was a certain amount of development in Mineral King anyway, although not of the magnitude involved in a ski resort.

So the club endorsed--I don't recall to what degree it promoted--but it certainly endorsed and, in some degree, promoted the idea that Mineral King should be considered for a major ski resort.

Lage: Was this tied in at all with the San Gorgonio area? I've heard it said that they were trying to divert the development of San Gorgonio. Were you aware of that?

Hildebrand: Yes, I don't recall whether the two were tied together much, but there was a situation there where the San Gorgonio [Primitive Area] was in an area that seemed more needed for other kinds of recreation and shouldn't have that kind of ski development in it. So, yes, we did play a major role in trying to protect the San Gorgonio area. That area was heavily used by Boy Scouts and others in the summer-time and seemed like an area that should be preserved for touring skiing and that sort of thing and not for a downhill ski resort.

Lage: Were you involved in the reconnaissance of Mineral King?

Hildebrand: Yes, we went down there and skied around down there and looked it over. It was given a lot of study, a lot of thought.* The board did endorse the idea.** Later on, when the Disneyland people decided that they would like to be the ones to develop it, it's true that they did envision a more intense and larger development than we had originally contemplated. But there had been some turnover in the board in the meantime and instead of trying to influence the magnitude and nature of the development, the board reversed itself and opposed the development. Not all of a sudden; this came up in a lot of debate on several occasions.

In the end though the club did reverse itself [May 1965] and just plain opposed it. There again, whether it was right or wrong in the first place, it was done very deliberately. It wasn't done offhandedly, and they went back on a commitment they had made. I don't feel the commitment was quite as binding as the one in the case of PG&E because it didn't involve your freezing somebody out of someplace else and then going back on your deal. It was a matter of a change of heart as to whether it was a good idea in the first place.

But nevertheless, the club did reverse itself. I think it was a case of rather bad faith, and they did so on a split vote. The board members who originally voted for Mineral King as a ski resort and who were still on the board, I don't think any of them changed position. But there were new members on the board.

*See "Winter Sports Possibilities in Mineral King," Sierra Club Bulletin, June 1949.

**September, 1949, Sierra Club Board of Directors resolved that "The Sierra Club finds no objection from the standpoint of its policies to winter sports development in Mineral King as proposed by the U.S. Forest Service."

Lage: I think some of them did change.

Hildebrand: Maybe some changed; I don't recall for sure. I could be wrong about that. But in any event, there were a number of us who felt that it should not be reversed.

Lage: What about if the question of reversing a vote hadn't been involved, just the merits of the case? Do you think it would have been wise to allow Mineral King to be developed?

Hildebrand: I think it's arguable either way. I think there are strong arguments on both sides, so had we not already made a commitment it's possible I might have been persuaded to change on that. But I felt that the commitment, since it wasn't a clearcut issue that we had been wrong, and since we had made a commitment, we shouldn't reverse it.

Lage: You would have voted to try to influence the way that it was developed.

Hildebrand: Yes, to influence how it was done, but not to cancel it. Now, it's possible that it would have proven to be uneconomic to make a more limited development such as we originally envisioned. This is a possibility. But had that proved to be the case, we wouldn't have been reversing our word because we would still have been saying that, if it could be done [on a limited scale] it was a good idea, and merely controlling the degree of impact. So I don't feel that was as flagrant a thing as the Diablo Canyon, but I still think it was unwise in terms of the club's future ability to have credibility in arriving at agreements, that it would go back on something where in my judgment, at least, the issue wasn't that strong clearly one way or the other.

Lage: Apparently, Martin Litton made quite a persuasive argument. Do you recall that?

Hildebrand: Oh yes, Martin Litton was very much involved in both of those reversals.

Lage: Did you find his arguments to be persuasive at all? Apparently, it changed several people's minds.

Hildebrand: No. He did change some people's minds, but I didn't find him persuasive, and I felt that the way he handled himself in the Diablo Canyon thing was totally dishonorable by my standards.

Pesticides Policy and the San Luis Drain

Lage: Should we talk further about pesticides policy?

Hildebrand: Well, we've touched on it a little bit. One of the first places that came up was when the Central Valley Project was put into the San Joaquin Valley. Part of the authorized project was to build a drain to get the salts back out of the valley. It was very essential that that be done. The Central Valley Project imports into the San Joaquin Valley about three-quarters of a million tons a year of salt which otherwise wouldn't be there. It puts a lot of that water on desert lands that never have been leached out by nature, so they pick up more salt.

Lage: Where does the salt come from?

Hildebrand: This is the salt that is generated by the natural process of decomposition of soils. That's why the ocean is salty. Over the last millions of years, the rivers and rains have washed this salt that is released from the soils as a natural process down to the ocean. In the state of nature it comes down in a very dilute form, so that it doesn't bother anything. But then as more and more water was being used for irrigation and so forth, the salinity has increased in the Delta. So we export pure mountain water from Friant Dam to the south, and then, to the extent that that's replaced, it's replaced with water from the [Sacramento-San Joaquin] Delta, which is still pretty good water but it has about seven times as much salt per acre foot as the water that is being exported. The result is that they import into the valley a tremendous amount of salt. You put that on desert lands, as I say, and leech out the natural salts there. On the west side of the valley, which is the side involved primarily, it also leeches out quite a lot of boron, which is bad for crops.

So it was recognized, when the Central Valley Project was authorized, that it was going to be necessary to get some of the salt back out. The valley drain was proposed to pick up not all, but quite a bit of that salt, and bring it down and put it in the Delta, in the western end of the delta, at a point where the natural waters would be a little saltier than the stuff we were bringing out. So you wouldn't be adding to the salinity at that point.

Lage: Did they call this the valley drain or--?

Hildebrand: I think they called it something else then--the San Luis Drain is what they called it.

Hildebrand: But there were people in the club who got the idea that these waters would be loaded with pesticides, and they would be very poisonous to the [San Francisco] Bay and that you shouldn't do that. In the first place, they totally overlooked the fact that if you don't put in the drain and bring this down, it's going to come down in the river. So it's going to go out the Delta into the bay anyway. So by not putting in the drain, you merely insure that whatever is in there is going to be in the river and damage the river all the way down.

The club got in and opposed the funding of that authorized drain so successfully that it hasn't been built yet. The result is that the San Joaquin River now conveys tremendous loads of salt coming down from the San Luis service area, and it's damaging the entire southern Delta and all of the lower San Joaquin River. There is very little pesticide in most of this. The saltiest waters are the ones that are picked up in the tile drains, and the pesticides apparently are pretty well filtered out before they ever get into it, so that the amount of pesticide involved is very minor. The salts are primarily calcium carbonates and calcium sulphates, sodium chlorides, and things of that sort; they're just natural salts, the same kind of salts you've got in the ocean and the bay.

To the extent that pesticides are any problem, you merely see that they are spread all down through the river and the Delta instead of putting them in [to the Delta] way out where they would be flushed out in a hurry.

Lage: Was this issue started back in the sixties?

Hildebrand: Yes, I was still on the board when that came up.

Lage: So that was tied in with the general policy relating to pesticides?

Hildebrand: Yes, it was about that time. Oh, I can't think of her name now but some woman who is not a scientist, wrote a story about terrible pesticides.

Lage: Rachel Carson? [Silent Spring (1962)]

Hildebrand: Rachel Carson, and made a tremendous impression on Dave and others. Of course, there was something to what she said. I don't mean to kiss it off, but it was partly a matter of being greatly exaggerated and partly a matter of not being sufficiently selective. Some of these things are bad, and some are not. You just can't damn the whole array. Furthermore, if you stop using pesticides, we'd have to stop doing a lot of eating. We've never fed the present population of this nation with the amount of agricultural product and the quality of product that you could raise if you didn't use any pesticides.

Hildebrand: It's true that we should continue to work to develop biotic controls, things of that kind. They do work to a limited degree. In general they take longer to develop, and so usually we have to use pesticides for some period of time against a given pest. Then sometimes they are able to develop a little wasp or something else that will serve the purpose. When that can be done, that's good. There are some pesticides that should be banned because they accumulate in the ecological system. But to just damn them generally doesn't make sense.

Lage: Did you feel that this was more of an emotional tack that the club was taking rather than a scientific one?

Hildebrand: Yes, they started getting into things like this where they weren't technically qualified to understand what we were talking about, and then they became far too broad and not selective enough in their criticisms. For a while there the club got into talking about pesticides and fertilizers as if they were all the same, and as if they are all bad, as if ammonia that you make in a plant was different somehow than ammonia that came from a cow's urine, which isn't true.

Lage: What about the argument that the cow's urine has other trace elements that maybe we don't manufacture when we manufacture ammonia? Is that valid?

Hildebrand: I doubt it. It's got more salt in it. In any event, the question was whether the ammonia content was bad, not whether there was something else that might be good. When the club starts getting into things it doesn't know anything about, it makes foolish statements.

Lage: So this was part of your concern or your reasoning that the club should stick with issues of scenic resources?

Hildebrand: Yes. Now, I don't say that pesticides shouldn't be an issue in connection with, for example, whether you should spray the Tuolomne Meadows. But even there, as you will see if you read my proposed publication policy, they should check out with qualified professional people whether what they are saying is technically sound and not just take some emotional stand on the thing.

To get into whether they should use pesticides in farming in general, is beyond the capability and proper role of the club. It's true that if those pesticides get into the natural waterways and cause problems, that that's not necessarily outside the club's concern. But in attacking that question, you can see in the case of the drain that what they did had the effect of making the river problem worse. So they didn't solve anything.

Lage: They didn't see the larger picture?

Hildebrand: They didn't see the larger picture, and the result of their seeing that it didn't get funded has been tremendous damage to the San Joaquin River and the southern Delta and to agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley.

Lage: Do you blame the club primarily for the San Luis Drain not going through, or were there other sources of opposition.

Hildebrand: They played a major role in blocking that.

Lage: What about other broader issues, such as population or air pollution, water pollution? Do you see those as more closely related to the club's proper function?

Hildebrand: I think it depends on circumstances. I think that the club, if it hasn't changed it, does have an appropriate policy on population which used to be in effect that the club supported measures which would make the public and government aware of the impact on scenic values in a country of steadily increasing population. This population pressure is a problem in terms of defending the ecology, no question about it. We wouldn't be building houses in the mountains and having to have all of these power plant dams and things if we didn't have nearly as many people. We wouldn't have to have so many irrigation projects, and dams to supply them, if we didn't have to feed so many people. Mankind does have a tremendous impact on the ecology of the country, and where that impinges on those areas of scenic beauty they are a proper role for the club.

So I think that is proper, but for the club to get into whether you should be for or against abortion, and what kind of contraceptives you ought to use, and whether they are given out to the teenagers, and all that stuff is way too far. But so far as I am aware, they haven't done much of that.

So I think on the subject of population, so far as I know, the club has acted sensibly.

Lage: And air and water pollution, would you say these were an appropriate concern?

Hildebrand: There again, it's hard to draw a fine line. I don't think it would be appropriate for the club to go into too much detail on that. On the other hand, I think it is appropriate for the club to educate the public and the government as to the impact on, for example, the Sierra Nevada of acid rain that results from coal burning plants that don't have adequate protection against

Hildebrand: the emissions of sulphur dioxide. I think that is a serious problem. I think it's a proper thing to do, but to just lobby against coal plants per se regardless of adequate emission controls, I don't think is proper. I think that it has to be in the framework of the impact of the resulting air pollution or rain pollution on those portions of the scenic beauty in the country that will be impacted by it. Similarly on air pollution.

Where the Club Erred: Scope, Tone, Degree

Lage: Okay, that's a good explication of your views, I think. One last question on this later period in the sixties. I think one thing that tends to be overlooked, and maybe you disagree with this, was that there were a lot of areas of agreement on the board, it seems--the Grand Canyon campaign was going on, the redwoods campaign, the Cascades, without too much controversy.

Hildebrand: I think you'll find that the areas of agreement were pretty much where the club was sticking to its historic role. There was never major disagreement on that. It was on these things where the club was branching out beyond its original scope and beyond its expertise. The club is expert on the question of scenic and recreational values of parks and forests and plays a valuable social role in calling attention to those, educating the public on those, and wherever that was what it was doing there was no big problem.

Lage: You were in favor of the club's expansion geographically?

Hildebrand: Geographically, although I recognized that it would create pressures and problems, I thought it was worthwhile because it gave more scope to our effectiveness in those areas where we were expert. After all, if you are an expert on the Sierra Nevada it doesn't take a lot of further study to become an expert on other mountain ranges of the United States. However, I got a bit doubtful about trying to understand what goes on throughout the world. I think that gets a little bit presumptuous, but that's a matter of degree. But so far as expanding geographically the membership and role of the club throughout the United States, I felt that was a risk worth taking.

But when they started expanding the subject scope into other areas than those covered by the bylaws rather directly, it seemed to me that they were making a mistake. It is being rather arrogant to think that you can be an expert on everything. But if you are not an expert on everything, you're going to do foolish things that will discredit you and diminish your effectiveness in the area of your expertise.

Hildebrand: Then there was this question, as I said, of the tone, how to accomplish things, whether by education and persuasion or whether to try to do it by confrontation; whether it's proper to impugn people's motives rather than their deeds; whether it is proper for the club to fail to give its own membership in its club publication, a knowledge of both sides of controversial issues--those were places where I felt the club went wrong.

Barbara

Hildebrand: What about the degree, like in Redwood Park?

Hildebrand: Well, I think they went overboard there. Yes, I think it's a difficult thing. Differences of opinion on this I think are legitimate differences. I don't mean to be critical of anybody having a different opinion. But one of the problems in the redwood areas has been that if you protect a little enclave of redwoods, and then you go ahead and harvest the whole watershed, you don't stop the erosion problems and so forth. Therefore, you can lose the place you are trying to protect.

So the club promoted rather successfully preserving the entire watershed of the redwood areas. But my own feeling is that that was excessive not in that you don't need to protect those areas from erosion, but that you don't really have to stop the harvesting of trees entirely. It's a matter of a methodology of harvest rather than whether you should harvest them.

I think the club was insensitive to the effect this had on the sustained economics of an entire region of the country there, which survived, as the backbone of its economy, on lumbering. Granted there have been some terrible abuses in the manner of lumbering in the past, some of the better lumber companies now, like Weyerhaeuser, are doing great things in developing sustained yield and doing it in a manner that does not damage--where they don't lose the soil, where they do reforest. I don't think the club has really faced up to the fact that it's perfectly possible to harvest trees just as you harvest corn or cabbage or something else and do it on a sustained basis.

It would have been more reasonable in my opinion to opt for a considerably smaller park that wouldn't damage the economy so much and wouldn't save a lot of trees that nobody is ever going to look at and instead go in for much more control of the manner in which the trees were harvested, so that it would protect the watershed. You did have to protect the watershed, but that's not the only way to do it.

Lage: It sounds as if you do have to do that through legislation because I don't think the lumber companies would do it on their own.

Hildebrand: Some of them do, and some don't. The better lumber companies now are rapidly switching over, like Weyerhaeuser, to sustained yield lumbering. When a company opts to do that, it has to opt to protect the soil. So here again, I think the club is reaping the result of having ridiculed the entire lumber industry, caricaturized them in [Sierra Club Bulletin] issues like that one I mentioned in, I think, September '71 as vicious, selfish people tearing up the entire country. The club has tended to categorize whole segments of industry, whole segments of the population, as being angels or devils to suit their needs, and I think that this is coming home to roost on them.

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Lage: Did you take any part in the election of 1969 where Brower was defeated for the board?

Hildebrand: Oh yes, I was among a good many people, longtime club members and past presidents and other officers of the club, who felt that if Dave was elected to the board and perhaps then became president of the board, the character of the Sierra Club would then become like some other organizations where you merely raise money to support a man in whatever he wants to do. We didn't think that would be good at all, and we opposed it, much as we liked Brower personally, and we did succeed.

Lage: So you did some election campaigning and--

Hildebrand: Yes, you will find some literature that bears the name of myself along with numerous other past presidents and other influential people in the club who opposed that.

Lage: [You are no longer a member of the Sierra Club. When did you discontinue your membership, and why?

Hildebrand: I don't remember the year, but it must have been in the early '70s. It was a year or two before the Proposition 17 (New Melones) issue, I believe. The reasons were that I did not want to be associated with a club whose conduct and methods I felt were often improper and which had expanded its coverage of issues beyond what I thought proper. I did so regretfully. I didn't resign. I just stopped renewing my membership. A.H., June '24, 1981]

V WATER POLICY ISSUES IN THE SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN DELTA

New Melones Dam: White Water or Flood Control and Water Supply?

Lage: Let's turn now--you mentioned to me that you were involved in delta water issues--I assume this is partly in your capacity as a farmer in this area.

Hildebrand: Yes, that is what got me involved in it, although I regard it as not just to protect my own interest as a farmer. Our farm isn't that big, and I won't be here twenty, thirty years from now anyway. Some of these things are damages that take place over a long period of time but which, once they take place, are almost irreversible. So the intensity of my interest in this would be a lot less if I was just worrying about my personal affairs. It's my feeling that this is a very serious thing for the state as a whole and particularly for northern California.

There are several components of it. The one that involved the major direct clash with the club was the New Melones project. The club there has backed the rafters who want to preserve the nine miles of white water in the Stanislaus River above the dam site, which would be flooded by the dam when the dam is full. They have looked at that white water as being so important that all other factors can be disregarded, in effect, including the fact that that's not a natural white water. That is white water that wouldn't be there in the summer except for the Beardsley Dam. These rafts are riding on the outflow of the power plant at the Beardsley Dam in the summer and fall of the year. In a natural state they would have some very high flows in the spring which would be too great for their rafts, and then they would have inadequate flows, but that dam provides the control which enables them to have this white water.

Now, there are trade-offs in anything you do, and I don't take pleasure in flooding that white water because whether it is artificial or not, I guess it's very nice. And there is consider-

Hildebrand: able beauty to the canyon, although most of that canyon won't be submerged. It would only be the narrow bottom of it, so that so far as witnessing the beauty of the canyon, a lot of that will be done by more people on flat water boats than on rafts. But still, it does involve flooding the bottom of a beautiful canyon. So there are some minuses, there is no question about it. But even if you view it solely from an ecological point of view, the club has refused to give any credence to the downstream ecological benefits, and by the club, I mean the club as a whole. The Stanislaus County club members have been in favor of the project.

Lage: Oh, they have?

Hildebrand: Yes, they were practically thrown out of the club for doing so. But those people and the farmers along the lower Stanislaus worked at great lengths with the Corps of Engineers to see that the project was designed so as to be a major ecological benefit and recreational benefit to the fifty miles of river downstream from the dam, and there is a further benefit to about seventy-five miles of channel in the southern delta. It will be a big benefit to the fishery. It will be a tremendous benefit in terms of canoe activities, the poor man's boating activities. This rafting is pretty expensive you know.

The project includes a string of twelve parks as part of the project, down along the lower Stanislaus which would be where you could launch your boat at one little launching park and take it out downstream somewhere. It would be a great thing recreationally and particularly for those people who can't afford to go run the white water.

There will be protection of the wildlife habitat along the river. So there are some rather substantial benefits downstream of the dam which are a trade-off, even ecologically, for the nine miles that you flood upstream. It's hard for me to understand how the club can be so supportive of similar downstream benefits on the American River below the Folsom Dam, and then totally ignore those benefits that are potentially available from the use of the Melones Dam. It seems highly inconsistent to me.

Lage: How did you come to your interest in the New Melones Project?

Hildebrand: Of course, we do have an interest relative to our farm here because we get flooded here from time to time, and a lot of that flood water comes down the Stanislaus. One of the major purposes of this dam is flood control, so we don't flood the farms all along the lower Stanislaus and in the southern delta--many, many thousands of acres.

Lage: Does that happen with regularity?

Hildebrand: Oh, yes, quite frequently. Every time it happens, it not only drowns the crops and causes a lot of damage to the farms with a resultant loss in food production, but it also drowns all of the wildlife up and down the river. So it's devastating to the little foxes and all the other nice little wildlife that we have. We have our little wildlife habitat areas in our farm here. When the riverside habitat is underwater, it isn't the way it was a hundred years ago where those animals could go back into the country somewhere because now the human population pressure has wiped out all of the kind of habitat that is elsewhere. So you flood them out of these habitat areas along the river, and they have no place to go. It is very devastating--little cottontail rabbits and all of these things. The club just refuses to pay any attention to that.

Now then, also, California feeds about twenty-five percent of the table food for the entire nation, including about fifty percent of the vegetables for the entire nation and about eighty-five percent of the processed tomatoes. A lot of that food is produced in San Joaquin County here and in the southern delta. But in producing this food, the state is overdrafting its ground waters by about a million and a half acre-feet a year. So we can't go on producing at the present level of food, let alone provide more food for a larger population, unless we stop overdrafting those ground waters.

So there is a big need in this state to provide enough surface water so that, combined with the sustained yield of the ground waters, we can go on feeding the population. The New Melones Dam is important in contributing a worthwhile amount of water toward that end.

You can't turn the clock back. We've got all of these people to feed. They are still coming. So it's not realistic to say, "Oh, well, we should just stop pumping this water out of our wells and stop producing the food we're going to eat." There are a few zealots who wouldn't mind just eating barley, I guess, but in general it's the vegetables that require the best quality of water and a lot of it. You can grow cotton on pretty salty water, but then we don't all want to go around nude either. So there is a pretty good case for this.

Opposing the Sierra Club on the Stanislaus Wild River Initiative, 1974

Hildebrand: Now, the club in its tunnel vision has only looked at the white water side of the problem. It would not acquaint its own membership with these other things I am telling you about. I was a scheduled speaker to go down to talk to the Southern California Conservation Committee or the southern section of the conservation committee, whatever they call it now, during the period when this was going to come before the electorate, I believe it was, in Proposition 17 which would have stopped the New Melones Project. I don't think I have ever been treated so rudely in my life. Even though I was a scheduled speaker, the chairman said in no uncertain terms when I was introduced--and I wasn't introduced until they dragged the thing out as long as they could late into the evening--told them that they were not to be influenced by anything that I might say--the club had already made up its mind--and to pay no attention to me. That's the way I was introduced. I said that I had never had that kind of an introduction before, but I would nevertheless say what I had come to say. I was treated rudely. My character was attacked. It was just an uncivilized kind of a meeting and, it evidences the biased attitude of the club at this time.

Nate Clark, who was at the meeting gave me strong support, but no one else defended me or objected to the uncivilized conduct. Incidentally, I was a member of the southern conservation committee when I was living in Whittier.

Lage: Were you a spokesman of this agency you were a member of, the South Delta Water Agency, or were you speaking as an individual?

Hildebrand: I was on sort of a committee to oppose the passage of Proposition 17. However, I guess I was primarily doing that as a spokesman for the Delta Water Users Association.

Lage: Were you introduced also as a past president of the Sierra Club?

Hildebrand: Yes, and one of the things that they were livid about was that in talking elsewhere, I had made no bones about the fact that I was a past president of the Sierra Club. I felt that I needed to indicate that I had some credentials for having some opinion on ecological matters when I was going to talk about the ecological downstream benefits. As long as I made it clear that I was a past president, there was nothing dishonest about it. It was quite clear, I'm sure, to every audience I spoke to that I was not speaking for the Sierra Club, I was disagreeing with them. So I saw nothing improper about that.

Hildebrand: One flap that was unfortunate, and that they chose to make a particular big thing about, was that I was asked to be a signator of the ballot argument against Proposition 17. Those who arranged this originally planned to indicate on the ballot argument that one of my credentials was that I was a past president of the Sierra Club. The other side had planned to do the same thing, and one of their signators was going to be shown as a past president of something or other, I've forgotten just what it was. Somebody in Sacramento ruled that a past title could not be put on the ballot argument. So both of those were struck off and whoever struck it off just substituted "member of the Sierra Club" which I was not. At that time, I had already dropped my membership in the club.

That was wrong and when I found out about it--I didn't know anything about it, I still don't know who did it--I tried unsuccessfully to get it reworded.

Barbara

Hildebrand: Larry Moss [then Sierra Club associate conservation director and later deputy director of the California Department of Natural Resources] told him.

Hildebrand: Yes, he called up and told me about it. I told him I didn't know a thing about it, and I would do everything I could to get it off. I solicited his help in getting it off because it hadn't been printed yet. I thought we had arranged to get it off, but it did stay on there. That was a misrepresentation because I was not a member. But they refused to accept my explanation that I had nothing to do with it, that I didn't know about it, and that I had done my best to get it off. I even contacted a number of newspapers and TV stations to explain to them that that was a mistake.

At this meeting they wouldn't accept that. They claimed that I had done this deliberately as a misrepresentation, and that it was a terrible thing. They barked at me that anyone who was a farmer was ipso facto obviously against conservation.

Lage: There are a lot of members of the Sierra Club with different points of view.

Hildebrand: That's right, they tried to make it appear as if the Sierra Club membership was entirely opposed to that thing. Actually, there were a number of other past presidents and officers who voted the same way I did. As we said, the people in the Modesto area, who had done a great deal of work to get this fine downstream ecological situation set up, were practically ostracized from the club just as I was for refusing to support it.

Lage: Do you recall the date of that proposition?

Hildebrand: Proposition 17, I don't remember that [1974].

Barbara

Hildebrand: It was to make the Stanislaus a wild river.

Hildebrand: The revealing thing about that is that they didn't propose to make the north fork, which is wild, a wild river. They only wanted to do the south fork, which has dams on it, to maintain their white water.

The Peripheral Canal: Threat to Delta Water

Lage: Is there any other area of water policy that we should talk about?

Hildebrand: Well, just very briefly there is, of course, this Peripheral Canal controversy. The club for some time supported that, largely due to the persuasion, I think, of Larry Moss. The Environmental Defense Fund, and the Friends of the Earth have always opposed it, properly in my opinion. They even held an election in the Sierra Club about whether the board should take this position or not. When the membership voted that they should oppose the canal, the board said, "Oh, that's just advisory. We'll go on; we know best."

Lage: Were you in opposition to the Peripheral Canal?

Hildebrand: Oh, very much so because what the canal does is connect the Sacramento River to Los Angeles so that in a dry year you can pick up the entire Sacramento River and ship it out and leave nothing in the [Sacramento-San Joaquin] Delta-[San Francisco] Bay estuary. Politics being what they are, with a majority of the vote south of the Tehachapis, that's what you can expect to happen. The only more or less valid argument--other than the capability of the canal to do that--the only other valid argument for the canal versus a largely open channel system is for a modest difference in the central delta fishery.

When the Central Valley Project was installed, they put a connection through from the Sacramento River through to the Mokelumne River channel in the central delta. But when the state water project came along and added their export pumps, they made no provision for getting the water across the delta without sucking water down around Suisun Bay and dragging salt water up into the delta. So now they want to build the canal to correct the damage they did when all you really need to do is to augment

Hildebrand: or parallel in some way or other this connection from the Sacramento River into the central delta. It needs to be somewhat larger than what's there now. You can either boost through with pumps on the facility that is already there or you could put another short canal to get through there. You do have to do that. There is no question about it. The damage from not doing it is considerable. But if you do that, which is a fraction of the cost of a Peripheral Canal, you correct the fish problem in the northern delta and the western delta. Neither plan does anything for the devastated fishing in the southern delta which was ruined by the CVP.

The only difference between the two alternatives, as distinguished from doing nothing, is the central delta fishery, and it's almost exclusively the striped bass in the central delta. The fish experts that I have listened to debate this, seem to differ in their judgments on what the effect on the striped bass in the central delta might be. They thought it could make a difference in the range of ten to twenty-five percent or something like that. But you can hatch striped bass in hatcheries for a fraction of the cost of the Peripheral Canal. By using open channels in the central delta area you guarantee that the delta will always be protected because the water for export to the south and the water for the delta come out of the same pond. So if they take too much water, they salt their own pumps up; they don't just salt the delta up.

Lage: That sounds like a better protection than a legislative--

Hildebrand: Oh yes, any piece of paper can be gotten around. So that gives us a physical protection that the delta will not be salted up if you fix it so the water comes out of the same pond. Furthermore, it's vastly cheaper. So the real argument, of course, is the one that they can't voice publicly and that is that by having the full canal, they can take the whole works. This thing has been grossly misrepresented. But Larry Moss particularly, and perhaps a few other Sierra Club people who are very cozy with the Jerry Brown people, supported the canal initially and have never given it up. Larry Moss still supports the canal.

Lage: Now, here is a case where you might wish them to reverse their earlier position.

Hildebrand: I think they are in the process of doing it. They have gone neutral.

Lage: The membership spoke; they voted against it.

- Hildebrand: Yes, the membership said they ought to reverse it, in spite of the fact that they may never have heard the other side of the story from the club.
- Lage: I thought it was ironic that a lot of the people in the club who had opposed the Diablo Canyon referendum, like Will Siri, were adamant in favor of this policy change on the Peripheral Canal, and supported the same kind of membership referendum on the canal issue.
- Hildebrand: I don't think there was anything dishonorable about the club changing its position on the Peripheral Canal because they never made a deal. They never said, "If you do this, we'll do this."
- Lage: Right, they just took a position.
- Hildebrand: Yes, they just took a position, and nothing has ever happened. It hasn't been built. The issue is still open. So there is nothing dishonorable about their changing their minds, particularly since they had a vote of their own electorate that said they should, whereas in the Diablo Canyon case, they had made a trade-off. They had agreed to a trade-off, and then they reneged on the deal. That's different.
- Now, I understand that the Sierra Club has representatives attending the meetings of the coalition against the canal on the assumption that the club is going to oppose it [the canal]. Mike Storper from the Friends of the Earth and Thomas Graff from the Environmental Defense Fund have opposed the canal all the time.
- Lage: Is your Delta Water Users Association also in opposition?
- Hildebrand: Oh yes, very much. From the delta's point of view, as distinguished from the state as a whole, there is also the problem that the canal would cause tremendous land damage. It would wipe out about six thousand acres of prime agricultural land in the delta directly. It's just a great big unlined dirt ditch. It will cause a tremendous amount of seepage. You could easily lose another twenty or thirty thousand acres of prime agricultural land from seepage. It will cause flood problems because it in effect divides the delta into two parts. It doesn't really go around the delta. It goes across the delta. There would be about two hundred thousand acres and about a hundred miles of channel on what would be the upstream side of the canal. They plan to block off a whole lot of natural channels, including Middle River, so that in major rain floods, there will be great difficulty in the flood waters getting across the canal alignment. It could easily back water up and flood vast areas including parts of Stockton and up through here.

Hildebrand: So there are many objections to it. It's a complicated problem. But how the club could ever have supported the canal is beyond me. I doesn't make sense at all.

Lage: I think it's a very complicated issue--the way the club happened not to oppose the Peripheral Canal.

Hildebrand: It is a complicated issue, yes.

Lage: Is there anything else we should add? I think we have about covered everything we planned.

Hildebrand: I think that's about it.

TAPE GUIDE -- Alexander Hildebrand

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Route 2, Box 137-L
Manteca, California 95336
January 19, 1966

Michael Mc Closkey, Conservation Director
Sierra Club
1050 Mills Tower
San Francisco, California

Dear Mike:

I have just received and read with interest your memorandum dated November 4 with your suggested policy on "urban amenities".

As you know, I heartily approve of your lucid efforts to help the board formulate general policy, and implementation guidelines. Furthermore, I am in personal sympathy, in principle, with efforts to improve "urban amenities".

However, I believe there are reasons why the Club should move further into this area only after very careful analysis of its complexity. This should lead to a more precisely defined scope and to guidelines requiring adequate knowledge of all sides of a specific case and avoiding non-conservation social issues before pressing for action, other than careful consideration and public information. I offer the following comments as food for thought:

1. Unless the by-laws are changed (and I don't suggest a change) the Club's interest should be limited to those "urban amenities" which clearly relate to scenic resources, natural ecology and wilderness. This seems to me to cover most urban billboards, urban highway junkyards, highway and power line routing in urban areas, pollution of air and natural open water, and open space preservation by appropriate means. I believe that things like architectural standards, historic preservation, and cluster zoning usually lie on the fringes of desirable Club scope and involve many major considerations that are far beyond our scope and competence.
2. Most of the Club's conservation work has related to the zoning of existing public lands for parks and wilderness, or to the acquisition of large undeveloped blocks of land for federal or state parks. The conflicts involved have largely been with the desires of others to exploit these lands for commercial purposes such as lumbering, mining, and water power, or for motorized recreation such as power boats, ski lifts, motor scooters, or the use of proliferating roads. In these cases conservationists often argue that they should urge scenic and ecological preservation and should not concern themselves with the case against preservation.

The pros and cons of "urban amenities" can be much more involved, and the proposed "improvement" may be only minor at great cost, or directionally debatable, or technically prohibitive, or attainable only at the expense of basic private rights, or social change. In the case of appropriate "urban amenities" I believe the Club could nearly always press for careful study and public disclosure of the case for "improvement" of an "urban amenity". But to press for action on a purist basis could, at times be technically or socially either wrong or doubtful and could even open the Club to effective and damaging ridicule.

It is easy to agree that people should be "good", but it is not easy to agree on what constitutes being "good" or how people should be made to be "good". Similarly it is easy to agree that "urban amenities" should be improved, but what constitutes "improvement" and how should it be achieved? What constitutes improved architecture; what historic items are worth preserving; what constituents and quantities in water constitute pollution; is it worthwhile burying power lines at great cost if one still sees government grain silos, or factories, or pink apartment houses or forests of TV aerials? If it is clearly desirable to make a given improvement there is still the question of How it is accomplished and one can not logically press for action without espousing a method as being appropriate. Who will pay for it and care for it and on what basis should injured parties be compensated? For example, should the public be given access to streams flowing through private lands or should the area merely be zoned for scenic preservation with adjusted assessed evaluation? If public access is the choice, who will pick up the inevitable litter, ^{and} control the shooting and water pollution and fires and trespass on adjacent land? What about the rights of local residents who are subjected to noise, trespass, loss of water rights, loss of property and livelihood, and loss of the atmosphere for which they came to live there? Similar problems arise in other "green belts" What about the private and social implications of saying that whenever a man invests his life's savings in some open space land he runs a risk that the public or its bureaucrats may decide to confiscate it, divide it, or restrict his right to earn a living from it or enjoy it on the assumption that they know better than he what constitutes wise use.

I request that these reservations be brought to the attention of those who received the proposal, but would be happy to discuss them further with you first, if time permits, before the board meeting in March.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

Alex. Hildebrand



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University of California
Berkeley, California

Sierra Club History Series

Martin Litton

SIERRA CLUB DIRECTOR AND UNCOMPROMISING PRESERVATIONIST,
1950s-1970s

With an Introduction by
David Brower

An Interview Conducted by
Ann Lage 1980-1981

Underwritten by
The National Endowment for the Humanities

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MARTIN LITTON

1978

Photograph by Mary Ann Eriksen



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INTRODUCTION

Mankind was given the art of speech
so that his thoughts could be hidden.

--Voltaire

Words can obscure thoughts, but words can also be played with, and illustrated. Illustrations can also be described with words. Now and then a pairing of the two will produce something that disappears in the absence of either. A photo-journalist can make pictures that speak for themselves. A journalist who masters prose can conjure up pictures with his words. And then there is Martin Litton, who combines the best of both worlds and adds the others. He can write journalese, if he must, as well as prose. He can also make photographs, depending upon need, that will tell stories, or incite dreams.

That's not all. Years ago, editing Wartime Shipyard at the University of California Press, I played with words for a subtitle and came up with "The Din of Inequity" and I am reminded of it when I think about Inequity and Martin Litton. Some people get the kudos and others, out of inequity, don't. Martin Litton is due most of those addressed to me in error: more years than I will ever admit, he has been my conservation conscience.

I had to know him before I could accept him as a conscience, and knowing him must have had its beginnings when I saw what the Los Angeles Times let him publish when he was in its Circulation Department. I remember a Martin Litton full-page spread, with his text and his illustrations, on what was going wrong in Kings Canyon National Park. Since the battle for the park had been my first, I was interested. When he came up with a spread on the threat to Dinosaur National Monument, where the Bureau of Reclamation was convinced it must build Echo Park and Split Mountain dams in a little-known unit of the National Park System, I got on the telephone to Los Angeles.

We began at once to exploit Martin's ability with lens and words. We didn't have much photographic coverage of Dinosaur at the time. The National Park Service photographs were for record, not for interpretation; Martin's were vice versa. Just before the Sierra Club and I were inundated in the dam controversy, a respected officer of the club, Walter Huber, said that Dinosaur was mostly sagebrush. Park Service Director Newton B. Drury, overwhelmed by the Bureau of Reclamation's political muscle within the Department of the Interior, had said, "Dinosaur is a dead duck." Although dinosaurs are long gone, their monument is still very much alive.

If you look over the illustrations in the battle to save Dinosaur National Monument, you will find Charles Eggert's color films, "This Is Dinosaur" and "Wilderness River Trail," Philip Hyde's beautiful work in black and white, and Martin Litton's 16mm color, 4x5 color, and black and white from cameras he happened to be carrying in battery, along with an eye and ear that missed nothing.

That was the beginning, but only the beginning. The proper photo-history of Martin Litton, with accompanying legends, could occupy many volumes. He had begun to photograph intensively pretty much on his own. Then the day came when Sunset Magazine was looking for a new travel editor, asked me for names, got only one, and took Martin on. Sunset was never particularly eager to be activist, and Martin was never eager at all not to be. Whenever he could add Message to the magazine's front travel section, there it was. If there was a piece of American environment that had problems, Martin found out about it, wrote about it, photographed it from the surface or, with a hand on the stick, from the air. Sometimes he could use his own name. At other times, he was Clyde Thomas or Homer Gasquez. So you have to go through numberless publications and add all three names up to appreciate the aggregate retrospective of Martin Litton.

Even that won't tell it all. Baldly, boldly, but with his permission, I used his lines in a Sierra Club film, "Wilderness Alps of Stehekin," where the prose is its very best in discussing the Olympic rain forest. His words and his color footage are gems in the club's Grand Canyon film. The Dinosaur spreads in the Sierra Club Bulletin abound with his work, and so does the Sierra Club book, in which, by intent, the club is nowhere named (nor am I) published by Alfred Knopf--This Is Dinosaur: Echo Park Country and Its Magic Rivers, edited by Wallace Stegner.

One year the Sierra Club directors, having voted for Grand Canyon dams and a year later reversed themselves, were ready to re-reverse. Martin's knowledge and eloquence stopped them. They were ready to go for the wrong Redwood National Park. It was Martin who knew where the best redwoods were, who had the creativity to propose a comprehensive Redwood National Park that would have been a monument to conservation genius. We didn't get it because organizational jealousies within the conservation movement--one of the major threats to environment--got in the way. It was Martin who knew where the gentle wilderness was on the Kern Plateau--wilderness that should have been added (and its remnants should still be added) to Sequoia National Park. "Old-boy" conservationist trades got in the way. It was Martin, alas, who happened to be in Bagdad when the Sierra Club directors voted, without seeing it, to accept Diablo Canyon as an alternate site for the reactor proposed to be built at Nipomo Dunes. Had he been in San Francisco instead, a different history would have been written.

How do I know? I don't, of course. But I did see how his eloquence brought forth audience applause that reversed what the Sierra Club directors were about to do to Marble Gorge of the Grand Canyon. I also know how,

when the club's board was discussing what to do at Mineral King with respect to Walt Disney's proposed ski development, and when I myself had wobbled and was about to go along, it was Martin who got me to reverse myself right there on the spot, in front of everybody.

In the conservation movement we keep trying to save places, and, often enough to keep our spirits up, we succeed--for the time being. For example, most of us think the Grand Canyon is safe from dams, or perhaps worse. It isn't. And if Martin Litton calls you up to save it from whatever the latest threat is, settle down and hear him out. You will be enthralled, informed, involved, and can help save it again.

David R. Brower

March 1982
Berkeley, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

In the series of interviews of Sierra Club leaders from the 1950s to the 1970s, Martin Litton represents the "purist" environmental viewpoint. At key points in the 1960s, his was the persuasive voice on the Sierra Club Board of Directors urging a firmer stand for the protection of California's coastal redwoods, the Mineral King Valley, the untouched coastline at Diablo Canyon, and the Grand Canyon.

Throughout the sixties and into the seventies, Litton's voice on the board proclaimed, sometimes with a ferocity that alienated the more tactful old-guard leaders, the doctrines that we see echoed equally eloquently in this oral history interview--the uncompromising defense of wilderness and areas of scenic beauty, wherever they remain unscarred by man's intrusions. On several key issues his words were decisive in bringing the club around to its now well-accepted decisions--to work for a large Redwood National Park on Redwood Creek; to fight against all dams in the Grand Canyon; and to oppose ski development at Mineral King. Sometimes, as on the Diablo Canyon issue, his point of view did not prevail.

Litton's oral history recounts the circumstances of, and Litton's role in, these controversial conservation campaigns. The elucidation of his purist views and his thoughts on campaign strategies--never ask for what's "reasonable," only for what's right--are of particular interest here, as are the insights into the evolution of his environmental philosophy and its connection with broader social and political outlooks.

Two lengthy interview sessions with Mr. Litton were conducted at The Bancroft Library in Berkeley in December 1981 and February 1982. In response to a request for his relevant papers, he appeared at the first interview with two suitcases and several boxes full of documents relating to his work in the Sierra Club. These included examples of his magnificent color photographs, which have had a prominent place in Sierra Club books and Bulletins and in many conservation campaigns.

He was fully cooperative in the interview process and fully candid, as those who know him might expect, in his assessments of events and their principal actors. Although Mr. Litton curbed his effusive style as much as possible to speak to the agreed upon interview outline, still his enthusiasm for his cause and his persuasive voice is apparent, even on the written page. The transcript was edited for clarity and continuity, but no substantive changes were made. Tapes of the interview, along with Mr. Litton's papers and photographs, are available at The Bancroft Library.

Ann Lage
Interviewer

March 31, 1982
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

I LIFE IN CALIFORNIA FROM THE 1920s THROUGH THE 1940s

[Interview 1: December 10, 1980]##

Growing Up in Inglewood, California: Family Life, Outings, and
Early Concern for the Disappearing Frontier

Lage: We want to talk today about how you became interested in conservation, what there might have been in your personal background that developed the strong conservation feelings that you have. Can you think of what may have been important experiences?

Litton: I think it was my childhood. In my early teens, I began to worry about how much there was on the road maps, and what a terrible maze there was. There was no frontier left. I think we've all experienced something of that; you looked at a map and there were too many roads. Of course, then there were only about one-tenth of the roads that there are now, and even then there wasn't much left of this romantic world that we lived in. I didn't want to see the frontier disappear. I wanted there to be some wild country out there for me to go to. That's a view that you change, I think, as time goes on. Now it doesn't matter whether we get into it or not, as long as it's there. That's the most important thing.

Lage: Where did you grow up that created this impression?

Litton: I was born in Los Angeles on February 13, 1917, and I grew up in southern California near Los Angeles in Inglewood, which was then a quite separate town. You went on a streetcar to get to the city, and there was nothing between you and it. There was a town here and

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 113.

Litton: a town there, and now they've all merged. We were about eight miles from the ocean, and to go to the ocean we would hike cross-country right through the bean fields and the barley fields, even as little kids.

Lage: Is that something all the little kids did, or was it something that just your family did?

Litton: Oh, yes, a lot of kids did it. Eventually, when we were old enough to have bicycles, we would ride our bicycles because there were some streets that went clear out. For example, Manchester Boulevard was a double concrete road built just before the Depression, and it was all beautifully done with curbs and divider strips and everything, and it went straight out to the ocean. Then along came the Depression, and nobody ever built a house anywhere near it, and it just stayed there with the weeds coming up, and it made a great bike path out to Palisades del Rey. That's the area where, afterwards, they built lots of houses, good ones, along the crest of the cliffs. Now they have all been shaken down by the jets going over, from LAX. As you know, the whole area is abandoned, and no one lives there anymore.

My father was a veterinarian, and I would go with him sometimes. Most of his work was on large animals--cows and horses and mules and goats. The land where the Los Angeles International Airport is now belonged to a well-known rancher who held one of the old Spanish grants. His name was Andrew Bennett. My father would go and work on his mules or whatever, and I still have snapshots that I made of spans of horses standing with the big threshers as they churned up the lima beans, threw the chaff out, and saved the beans. That was kind of dramatic.

Lage: Did your family travel or camp?

Litton: No, my family didn't travel, but there used to be a ritual that everyone went through: the Sunday afternoon drive. My mother kind of kept me going to church except on rare occasions when we had something to do for the whole day. I couldn't wait for 12:15 when the benediction would come, and we'd all run home, have dinner at noon, and then go on the Sunday drive. I would be out there, even as a little kid, polishing up the car windows so we could see better. The place where my father wanted to go wasn't always where I wanted to go. I remember it was always quite an experience, even though I had been over the ground again and again. I got very interested in trees. Of course, on the coastal plain down there almost everything that's taller than a bush is a eucalyptus tree or a palm tree because that's what grew [chuckles], and the choice wasn't great.

So it was really a tremendous thrill to go up into the mountains as far as, say, Lake Arrowhead, where there was a pine forest that we never saw in the lowlands. We finally got around to going to

Litton: Yosemite [in 1931]. I may have been fourteen or fifteen years old. I was in ecstasy for the whole month. You'd camp there for a month and nobody cared.

You set up your camp and put your ropes around a quarter of an acre, hang blankets or sheets or something, and you had it all to yourself. We didn't realize it, but we were part of what was going to become a problem. But it hadn't become a problem then.

My cousins lived in northern California, my uncle (my mother's brother), her uncles and so forth. The whole family was in northern California except my mother. She had met my father when he became a veterinarian, going through San Francisco Veterinary College (the college doesn't exist anymore). My mother and father moved to southern California. My cousins, their whole family, would go to Yosemite and spend the entire summer there. Dad and my uncle would drive up on weekends and spend the weekends with us and go back to work during the week. When I went to Yosemite with my mother and my brother and sisters, we camped with my cousin's family for a month. It was quite a long time, but we never got tired of it. There was always something to do. Then my father came up and picked us up in the Willys-Knight and drove us home.

I never think how old I am until I catch sight of myself in a mirror, but this does go back a little. In the twenties California was really wonderful, and we knew it. We weren't looking for something better. That was imposed on us as a result of World War II, I think, when everybody took a look at California and decided they'd come back and live here forever.

Kids on the [San Francisco] peninsula, all around that part of the bay, would spend their summers working. They would get summer jobs, most of them, and the big summer job was cutting cots. This was the big apricot growing area. Apricots were dried. Practically all of them were put out on trays to dry. The apricots were opened, and the stones or pits were taken out of them by kids. The apricots would come in by the ton, and here would be all of us kids standing there and cutting them open and putting them on the trays. Then the apricots would go into the ovens where they would get sulphur dioxide burned under them to kill the parasites or whatever. I don't know what that was for, to make them dry better without rotting, I guess. I think they still do that.

You could eat all the apricots you wanted. Generally, you ate a lot of them the first day [laughs], and then from then on you never ate another apricot!

Lage: Did you come up to work on the peninsula?

Litton: We would come up to the peninsula [1916-28] to spend maybe a month or six weeks with our cousins. We would get these jobs, and the pay was one cent per lug box for doing this. You realize if you were real good at it and worked diligently from dawn 'til dusk--they didn't worry about child labor then, you were doing it because you wanted to, you wanted to earn some money--you could do fifteen lug boxes in a day if you were fast, and then you had fifteen cents. Well, you could go to the movies that night and still have a nickel left over! [laughter]

Lage: It does make you realize how times have changed!

Litton: Yes, but it was so nice because the world was stable. You didn't have to think about inflation because there wasn't any. Your money was going to be worth as much the next year as it was then. People talk about the Depression, and I don't remember it as a bad time at all. Politically, of course, it made a lot of hay to make it a bad time because it gave saviors a chance to come along and save us all from it.

Lage: Did your own family not experience a lot of difficulty during the Depression?

Litton: Everybody slumped together. I don't remember that we were ever deprived of anything. My father was in business for himself, being a horse doctor. Eventually he was a dog and cat doctor as the times changed. We had people who were on what was called "relief" then. We knew people who were on relief, and the way they were on relief was that they would get food; that is, canned food was given out. We never had any relief food, but I remember that the relief cans never had any labels on them, so they were different from the cans in our house which had labels.

When we would come north to spend the time with our cousins, we came on the train. Then there was a train from Los Angeles up through Palmdale, Mojave, across the Tehachapi Mountains. There was more than one train per day. The trains went faster then than they do now. I don't know why they can't make the trains as good as they used to be. We would come on a night train called the Owl, the Southern Pacific Owl. It didn't stop at Martinez or Oakland or Richmond, but came right across the bay into San Francisco on a ship. We always had sleepers, everybody did, and the fare was under ten dollars. Very often when we would wake up in the morning, we would already be on the ferry boat, still in bed in the Pullman.

Lage: Do you mean the entire train?

Litton: The whole train went on, and it was taken in several parallel sections so that it wouldn't be the whole length of the train. The Southern Pacific had ferries. They had ferries right up to the last for people and not cars, right up to the last of the ferries where they would bring commuters over without their cars. Yes, the whole train would go on the ferry boat. I remember we used to have to get dressed during the time the ferry was crossing because it would be early in the morning, and the porter would be out there shuffling around and putting our bags in the vestibule.

I remember waking up in the morning, and what had awakened me was probably the shunting of the train onto the ship. The ferry boats came right into the Ferry Building. You got off and there you were, right in the middle of San Francisco. There is nothing to compare with that now. I mean that kind of service doesn't exist. Can you imagine if the airlines could somehow figure out a way to get you downtown! But the train did, and now we've got this Third and Townsend business [the Southern Pacific depot in San Francisco] down in the worst possible place, and that's the best service we seem to have been able to develop.

Lage: So things aren't necessarily improving from the way you look at it?

Litton: No, I don't think the world has improved since Adam and Eve. That's when we started our downfall! [laughs] Even in the Bible it tells you that.

Lage: You say that when you were a teenager you were aware that the roads were taking over the wilderness.

Litton: Yes, in fact, that's why we started that club that I told you about, California Trails, to try to stop that. One of them we succeeded in stopping; that's the Lone Pine Road from Porterville across the southern Sierra to Lone Pine. That area is now the Golden Trout Wilderness, which I have been working on since I was seventeen years old.

Lage: What time period are we talking about now for the California Trails?

Litton: That was 1937. I was already in college then, and several other fellows did this with me. One of them was Norman Padgett, who died recently after a career as the head of director of recreational activities at UCLA [University of California at Los Angeles]. We were afraid the wilderness was all going to be gone, and yet there was a tremendous amount of it then compared to what there is now.

A friend of mine and I, when we were in our mid-teens, went to climb Mount Whitney. We took twelve days to do it. We went from the south, and there wasn't any easier way then. The road up the canyon

Litton: that takes you so close to it now wasn't there then. We didn't see another person the whole time. Imagine that on Mount Whitney now! [laughter] There are two hundred people on Labor Day.

Lage: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Litton: Yes, I had one brother and two sisters.

Lage: Did they have similar interests?

Litton: Well, my brother went with me a great deal, but I guess he didn't have the same motivation because it hasn't shown up since, not to any degree that I know of. He likes to be out and all that, but he's never taken part in conservation.

One thing that I started to tell you about was the Sunday drive and the hike. Of course, when we got old enough to have bicycles, we could bicycle through the mountains and then walk.

Lage: That must have been quite a bike trip, from Inglewood to the mountains.

Litton: Topanga Canyon was pretty wild then, and it had a perennial stream where you could swim and do all of these things. It was a great wilderness then. It seemed like it. That's now in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. That was about twenty-five miles one way from our house. Griffith Park used to be a wilderness. We'd go and climb Bee Rock and go through the caves. We couldn't go without a car to the big mountain wilderness of the San Gabriel Mountains. We would have had to go clear around to the other side of the mountain and come hiking up the north slopes. Of course, when I got old enough to go to college, my father bought me a car for thirty-five dollars--which was about par in those days. Then I could go and push the car once in a while! [laughs]

With a car I could get to places that were wild. The San Gabriel Mountains area was the nearby wilderness, and one we were very concerned about. Of course, there are designated wildernesses there now, and yet none of it is as wild as it was before the designations. In some ways we do put pressure on these places just by setting them aside.

Formation of Youthful Conservation Ideas

Litton: I started to tell you something. My mother was very religious. She was very worried and concerned that we wouldn't grow up good Christians and wouldn't go to church every Sunday and all that sort of thing. She also--and I think my father did too, although he didn't

Litton: show it--had a caring for natural beauty. We lived in a house that was on a slight eminence. Actually, it overlooked the Santa Fe railroad tracks coming out to Inglewood.

We had a good view of the sunset and a lot of open country. I guess there still is some kind of horizon from that point in Inglewood. There used to be a lot of beautiful sunsets--maybe we don't look hard enough, maybe there still are. There were a few boxes and old chairs out in the backyard, way down about where the hill dropped off to the railroad tracks. When there was a beautiful sunset, we wouldn't have to drag mother out. She would ask us to come out, and we'd all go out and sit there and watch the sunset. That happened a lot. We would just sit until it was dark. We wouldn't move back in the house, although I must say I don't do that anymore.

Lage: Those things have their lasting effect, I think.

Litton: Well, I guess so. Then, of course, every once in a while we'd get a little message from her that someday the sky was going to be like that and then it would open up, and Jesus would come back.

Lage: She tied this nature appreciation to religion.

Litton: Well, in a way, yes, because God was making all of this beautiful stuff.

Lage: What religion was she?

Litton: We were all in the Methodist church, which in those days was a normal Protestant church. Now different churches go different ways, and they get political and so forth. But in those days--the Presbyterian, Congregational, Methodist, Baptist--I think they all did about the same thing. I wasn't exposed to any of the others. Anyway, that little bit did come through, that some day the sky is going to open up, and then we'll all be together again with our parents and grandparents. After all, it's gone full circle. Ronnie is in [laughter] and the Moral Majority and all that. But it was a gentle thing with my mother. She was on fire, but it was always a gentle thing. Of course, having that kind of pressure as a kid makes you resist religion, I think, and makes you tend to go the other way, probably, but I didn't do so.

Lage: Did you follow religion as you got older?

Litton: No, I don't belittle it or put it down, but I don't have a great personal interest in it. That is, you know what I mean by religion. Everybody has got a religion of some kind, but I'm a backslider from the standpoint of going to church.

Lage: Maybe some of yours is expressed in your conservation activities.

Litton: Well, you can always say that, the groves were God's first temples and all. But I've never thought of it that way. I don't think that much of humans. We've set ourselves up to be god-like as a separate species from all other animals. Obviously, the damage we do makes us separate. We've been able to convert the earth as no other creature ever could, but to say that we're in the image of God and all that is anti-religion because it's prideful. You're not supposed to have pride, and yet if you say I look like God, you can claim the Bible says so. [laughs] We're way off the subject now!

Lage: Well, I think this is interesting, and it ties in at some point.

Litton: The other day the American Wilderness Alliance had a two or three-day meeting in Denver, and I was the keynote speaker. By the time I got up, the time had run out for me to talk. You know how it is. You're to talk until such and such a time. I looked up and that was the time when I got up, so I didn't say much. What occurred to me was that they wanted me to give a capsule history of conservation or to trace the history of conservation.

The first thing we have that we can relate to conservation is in the oldest book we have that we can read, and that's the Bible. You can talk about going into the wilderness, but people in biblical times went for somewhat different reasons: they sometimes went as punishment, as outcasts, or to go and get their thoughts straight. That's what Christ did, and some of the disciples would go out in the wilderness so they could cleanse themselves and get it all straight and maybe starve a little and come back. I brought the idea of going into the wilderness up through Leonardo da Vinci, for example, who, as far as we know, is the first person who ever climbed mountains for pleasure. For most people in the past, mountains or hills were always in the way. They were something to get over, and people didn't want them. They didn't want to have to climb. Da Vinci got a lot of joy out of it. You could come up through time to Aldo Leopold.

Religion comes into it in a way because the oldest literature that any of us have access to is the Bible, and there are various allusions to the wild and the wilderness in the Bible.

Lage: There is kind of a double message, too--taming the wilderness.

Litton: Yes, there is, or that the wilderness was a place to be banished to. You let me ramble! [laughs]

Lage: I think it's important because it is part of what you are bringing to conservation.

- Litton: I don't know. I've always worried about things, about the earth and the shape it's in, and now I've just about given up on lots of things. For one thing, there is a lot more interest in conservation now. There never used to be. The average person was too busy making a living and thinking of progress and money and getting more people and seeing how their town grew. We want to grow, don't we? We've got to grow.
- Lage: You had ideas that now are more generally accepted, but you were holding them in a time when most people didn't think about the environment as much.
- Litton: I guess you could say that because my ideas were always quite extreme. I didn't like what was happening. Yet, I remember taking pride in the growth of Los Angeles because it seemed to be pretty, and everything was bright and shiny in those days. We didn't know the city was going to encompass every last square inch. That was the problem.
- Lage: Was there any particular reading you did that may have encouraged some of these ideas?
- Litton: I don't remember.
- Lage: It was more your personal experience?
- Litton: I don't remember. I know that when I got into the university, I had subjects I could pick. For example, I could decide what I was going to do my term paper on. Some of these subjects sounded like wilderness. I hadn't familiarized myself with the great authors. I immediately snatched up one, for example. [pauses to recall] It's famous. It's by [James] Boswell. Isn't Boswell the guy who did all the biographies and all of the biographical stuff on Dr. [Samuel] Johnson?
- Lage: Yes.
- Litton: Well, it was an account of a journey to the Outer Hebrides. [Journey of a Tour in the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson] The Journey to the Outer Hebrides didn't have anything to do with the Outer Hebrides. It was all Johnson's pontificating politically and saying all the things he believed were wrong with the world and society and everything and how to make it better. Boswell would sit there in awe of the great man and write down everything Johnson said. But you never got to the Outer Hebrides. I was never exposed to that, but I was stuck with the subject! [laughter] I guess the only way I learned anything was by seeking after subjects that I thought dealt with nature and the wilderness and finding out that they were something else.

Litton: There is another book, Far from the Madding Crowd. It had nothing to do with being "far from the madding crowd!" [laughter] I guess they were out on a farm or something, but they weren't out in the wilderness anywhere. Those novels never had anything to do with anything, as far as I'm concerned. I'm amazed that people major in English.

Lage: You went to UCLA and what was your major there?

Litton: English because I thought it would be easy. [chuckles] I wasn't anxious to go anywhere in those days, and neither was anyone else.

Experiences in the Army and at the Los Angeles Times During the Forties

Lage: Why don't you tell us how you began to work for the L.A. Times?

Litton: The war was a big factor in all of our lives then, World War II. At UCLA, like everyone else, I was in the R.O.T.C. [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]. There was an advanced R.O.T.C. that I think about half of the students went into afterward. It was the only way in the world to get any money out of the government. They gave you little allowances for uniforms and so forth which would seem petty now, but seemed like a lot then. Also, people took pride in wearing the uniform. It was an achievement and an accomplishment. It was something that I was proud of. I had never seen a soldier in my whole life, and to get over there at UCLA and see all these guys going around in their snappy Sam Browne belts and their riding boots with spurs, and sabers dangling at their belts and all, why, that looked pretty impressive to me! [laughter]

Anyway, I was at UCLA, and I went into all of the usual things. I wasn't in a fraternity, but I was in all the extracurricular things.

Lage: When did you graduate?

Litton: In '38; the class of '38. We went out and looked for a job then, and we realized--I think everyone more or less realized--we were going to be at war. It was all heading that way. In fact, while I was at UCLA, our professor of political science would make a diagram on the blackboard and practically tell you the day war was going to break out. By '39 there was a world war, but we weren't in it.

I took a job as the first public relations man that The Wigwam ever had, which doesn't sound like much, but The Wigwam is a very fancy winter resort in Litchfield Park, Arizona. It's a dude ranch

Litton: and it's owned by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. It used to be for their executives only. Then they opened it to the public, and they wanted a publicity man. I went over there and got seventy-five dollars a month and room and board for a season. I didn't like being away from home that far. It was pleasant, but my girl was back home in L.A., and I never got to see her while I was over there. She's the one I'm married to now, and have been for thirty-seven or thirty-eight years. Thirty-eight years, gosh!

At the end of one season, the job was supposed to end and then they said, "Why don't you stay around? We'll do something else." I said, "No, I want to go back home."

I went back home, and I had a teaching job for a short while. Then I went to work for the Times.

Lage: You started that early on?

Litton: Yes, I just went down and put in for a job. I didn't know what it would be--anything. That was the way people did things then--a job. You had to have it, and you weren't so picky. What I was doing was part-time. I was a tour guide through the Times building. They had a lot of people touring the building. If there is any way to learn the newspaper business, it's to guide people through the building because you have to explain everything that goes on: how wire photos are transmitted and how the Linotype machine works. I guess they don't have any Linotypes anymore. That was a fascinating thing, and I used to explain how the plates are made to go on the presses and how they are bent into a half-circle so they'll fit the rollers. I explained everything--the advertising and the public relations. I'd take them right through the press room. I didn't care if they fell down and broke their necks! [laughter]

I was a guide there, and I forget what else I did, but it was just office work. We were really biding our time because I kept getting messages from the army saying, "Are you ready?" In July of '41 I was called to active duty, and we were on maneuvers on the East Coast. I was assigned to the Army Air Corps, which was part of the army then. There wasn't any air force; it was army. We were having war games, the Reds and the Blues, fighting it all out back there. All of a sudden everything was dropped and cancelled, and we were told to take the planes to Oakland immediately. That was probably about the fourth of December, '41, just two or three days before Pearl Harbor.

Lage: The army knew Pearl Harbor was coming?

Litton: Yes, somebody did. They say Roosevelt engineered it. I was in the Twentieth Fighter Group, which had been based at Hamilton Air Force Base. It was Hamilton Field then. It was part of the army. We

Litton: were to move to Oakland and we took all the guns and all the military hardware out of the airplanes so they would fly better across the continent, and we put all the guns away in Cosmoline and packed them up and put them on a freight train. The train was going to take nine days to get to the coast. Nobody said, "Bring the guns." They said, "Bring the planes." We brought all the planes, and we got out just about the day before Pearl Harbor. I guess maybe it was the day of Pearl Harbor because that night--it wasn't until about midnight that the news was allowed to be broadcast--we heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked.

When we got to Oakland, they were busily putting up revetments, sandbags and everything, and the airplanes had to be dispersed all over the airport--and this was before Pearl Harbor. There were some things going on in Washington, so there we sat. There wasn't anything that could be fired at anybody. Of course, everyone thought the Japanese were going to be here any minute. The guns were on the freight train, and we didn't know where. The train was coming across the country slowly--but as fast as it could go, I guess.

The train was still going to take a long time, so a couple of us went up to Hamilton Field and started nosing around. Oh, gosh, were you popular then! I mean if you were going to the movies, you'd get a police escort if you had a uniform on. [laughter] But we were going to save the country. So we went up to Hamilton Field, and we found this old training plane.

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Litton: It had a single .30 caliber machine gun on a ring mount in the back that you could swing around a la World War I. It had open cockpits, of course, one in the front and one in back, one for the pilot and one for the gunner. It had just been used as a trainer, just to practice shooting at tow targets.

Somebody had to do something because for all we knew the Japanese were just about to land and, as you know, all the guns around the Golden Gate couldn't be elevated. They were made to shoot at Spanish galleons. They weren't made to shoot up in the air. We had this thing, and we took off. I was the only person in our outfit who had ever actually fired a machine gun by hand because I had been in the infantry training at UCLA. These other guys had just gone through flying school, and all they did when they wanted to fire was push a button on a stick. All the guns were out the wings. They didn't have to handle the gun, load it and manage it or anything. That was all done for them. All they did was point the airplane and press the button in training, which was all any of them had ever done--I mean practice. We weren't in the war, so we had never been at war.

Litton: I was the only guy who had ever loaded a machine gun and knew how to operate it by handling it. I sat in the back cockpit, and one of the fellows got in front, and we flew up and down the coast for three or four days. We were the only aerial defense that the United States had on the Pacific Coast at that time, as we went up and down suspiciously looking at sea gulls and everything! [laughter] Finally, the navy came up with a PBY ["Patrol Boat" made by "Y," the code for Consolidated Aircraft Corp.], the big flying boat. They found one of those somewhere. That thing would only go about ninety miles an hour. That's about what our airplane would do. We would fly around, and we'd see them once in a while--"Hi, there!" We're all sitting out in the open. That was the total defense of the whole Pacific Coast for the first few days there. Of course, we didn't need it.

When the guns did show up, the pilots were so trigger-happy that they went up and down the coast shooting at everything--rocks, sea lions, anything that moved. They would blast it because they had just gotten so worked up over this thing that they couldn't do anything about.

Lage: Was it during the war that you got your flying technique that is so famous?

Litton: Is it famous?

Lage: I've heard many people comment on the way you can fly and take pictures at the same time.

Litton: I learned to fly in the service. It wasn't very smart from the standpoint of personal ambition, but I went out and became a glider pilot in the war. That didn't really put you anywhere in the hierarchy at all, but there were a lot of us, and there had to be a lot. I went back to the Twentieth Fighter Group for a while before any of us went overseas back in '43. I had already become a pilot then.

When the time came for the invasion, D-Day, on June 6, '44, I will say the army's records were good because they managed to round up every glider pilot, everybody who had been trained in gliders. They rounded them up no matter what they had gone off to do, because the whole program had kind of fallen apart. Everybody felt, "Oh, we'll never do this." Everybody got reassigned to become bombardiers or navigators or to have desk jobs, or to fly bombers or something like that. All the glider pilots were just dispersed all over through the whole service all around the world.

Just about a month before the invasion, they managed to locate every one of us. They got us all on the boat, and away we went! [laughter] I was flying through the war, but not thousands of hours or anything like that; it was measured in the hundreds. I fly more

Litton: in one year now--in one year--than I did in the whole war. Our missions weren't too frequent. With gliders you only did it when there was an invasion in which you had to carry troops and machinery in.

On the other hand, the people who were involved in flying bombers such as B-17s went out everyday and were such good targets. The glider was a poor target because it came in low, and the idea of a glider being shot down is something very rare. The missions were kind of rare too, compared to the everyday ones in a bomber. Those poor bomber crews would go out, and they'd sit up there day after day, and they'd be so high that there was all the time in the world to get zeroed in on them. Frequently, during the heat of the war when it was really at its worst, when they were going over eastern Germany, it was characteristic for only half of the formation to come back. All the others were dead. Well, the next day when you went out, half the people who went out with you were guys you had never seen before. They had come in as replacements the night before. The bomber crews were really the ones who suffered, and it's a wonder they didn't all crack up, I mean in their heads.

Lage: The glider pilots weren't exposed to the same danger?

Litton: Well, the bomber crews felt very sorry for us because we were in a little thing made out of canvas. It wasn't so little, come to think of it.

Lage: It sounds more dangerous.

Litton: There was no armament. There was no armor plate; nobody had a parachute. There was nothing to shoot back with, and you didn't have three inches of glass in front of you. On the other hand, you didn't go out everyday either. After we'd land, we'd finally work our way back to England, which was where the gliders were all operated from, at least all the early ones were. Once the glider pilots land, of course, they are there. Wherever you go, you're there, and you've got to find your way back and leave the infantrymen behind. In fact, being a glider pilot was considered so rough that after every glider mission we would get at least a week, sometimes two weeks' leave, and we could go off to Scotland or do anything we wanted to do in that time, and wouldn't be needed again right away.

It wasn't a bad life at all. It was a life in which you sometimes wondered what to do with yourself. We'd sit around carving balsa wood into model airplanes and things like that. A lot of time was wasted, but in order to have people ready and waiting to do the things that have to be done, of course, there has to be a lot of this "hurry up and wait" business.

Litton: When I came back from the war I went to the Times. The Times had never had me on as a full-scale employee. I had just done these things on a part-time basis or temporary basis. As soon as I went in, they didn't have to rehire me the way employers were supposed to do after the war. They didn't have to, but they offered me the pick of anything that was available.

The first thing that was available was being an engraver, and I took it--I wouldn't turn anything down. You'd feel you'd look lazy if you didn't take the first job offered you. I went over into the engraving department, but then I realized that it was never going to work because during the war, when I was taking a physical examination, I learned for the first time that I was color blind. My brother and I are both color blind.

Lage: Do you mean you don't see the colors in your beautiful colored photographs.

Litton: I see colors. I learned all about color blindness because the first time I went to take flight training I was washed out on color blindness right away--[whistles]--just like that! I didn't know I was color blind. The doctor was holding out the book with all of the little dots in it, and I'd read them. I read the first one, the red on blue. He turned the page, and it's all these pastels, and I'd either read nothing or the wrong number. I thought, "Why can't I see that? I've never had any trouble." I remember that my brother and I would call flowers blue, and my father would correct us and say they were purple, but we just thought he was dumb! Color blindness is an every-other-generation thing, and it's only passed through the mother. Therefore, your father's condition has nothing to do with it. In other words, my children are not color blind. My daughter's children will be. It's pretty exact. Not my daughter's children--my daughter's sons. Color blindness is a phenomenon that only affects men.

Lage: It's like certain kinds of baldness.

Litton: Yes, men are the only people who are really color blind, and all color blindness is the same. No matter what they say, you may be color ignorant and not know what a color is, but that Ishihara [color blindness test] book, that's what really screens you. You can't cheat it. If you are red-green color blind, that's it. That's color blindness, and it's in men and it's every other generation.

I didn't know I was color blind, but now, of course, my brother and I both know we are, and my mother's father was. But none of my children are, and my sisters aren't.

I found that out during the war, and the next time I went to take flight training, I reasoned correctly that any record of my first application would, by then, be buried somewhere. I just didn't

Litton: take a physical examination. When everybody would line up for the physical, I just didn't go. By the time they caught up with me, I was already moved on to the next stage of flying which was at some other base a thousand miles away. I was in primary, basic, advanced, and all that. I just stayed away. Each time I would be transferred, the company clerk, or whoever it was, would be going through my records. He'd say, "I don't see your physical here, sir." I said, "Well, it probably hasn't caught up with me yet." He put that in the file, saying, "That's probably it." I was already flying then. Here I am flying around in an airplane, and I was color blind. On several occasions the doctors found out about it because I'd be flying them to something, and I'd casually ask them the color of something that was so obvious to them.

One time on an invasion going into Holland I was leading, and there were 3,500 gliders, and I don't know how many tens of thousands of men and jeeps and guns. We were going in on the famous Operation Market Garden. They made a movie, A Bridge Too Far, about it. The operation was partly a failure. The British part was too far ahead, and they were wiped out, but ours was okay.

On that flight we were flying over from England and, of course, I was going to be the leader. I was going to take the whole thing in. I had to, therefore, decide where to land. Of course, we were briefed with aerial photographs which were made when it was very clear, and everything was crisp. The instructions were that we were to land when the pink smoke signal--pink! Oh, my god, that's hopeless! To a color blind guy that's grey, light blue--that's anything but pink. It has to be a real salmon orange pink before you see the red in it. Red and green are the weak colors to a color blind person. The yellows and the blues come out very strong, and that's why orange looks like just a deep rich yellow until it gets way over in the red. If it's pure red, you see it. Color blind people see the red and the blue and they're fine. But if you told me that blue was purple, I'd have to agree with you because the blue would be the strong thing.

We go along in the woods, and my wife will spot little red flowers; I never see them. But I spot the yellow and blue ones before she does.

So the pink was hopeless. I thought, "Oh, god, what will I do?" I don't want to tell anybody because that will wash me out right on the eve of this invasion. Maybe I should have; it would have been smart! [laughs] Some guys found ways to be sick. But I thought, "Oh, I won't worry about that. I'll just wait until I see some smoke and do it then. I'll just cut this thing off and go in."

Litton: There also was a warning signal from the tow plane. A little light went on and started to flicker when we were approaching the landing zone. The airplane was towing us. The trouble was, it was in the fall, the days were short, it was late in the day, the light was very poor, and there was smoke everywhere. I mean, after all, there was a war going on. There was smoke everywhere when we got there! I didn't know the pink from the blue from the green from the black. Everything was smudgy, smoggy, smoky--

Lage: It might have been hard even if you weren't color blind.

Litton: It might have been, but I got the little flicker, and I knew I was supposed to go somewhere, and all these guys were coming along behind me. It was hopeless as far as any pink smoke was concerned. I didn't know where to go.

Lage: Were you the only guy on the plane?

Litton: No, I had troops in there. But they were scared to death anyway, and it would have been worse for them to have their pilot not knowing what he was doing, if I would say, "Do you see any pink smoke down there?" Lots of bullets were coming up, and you could see them. You can see tracers, big red tennis balls coming at you very slowly. They might go right through the glider here and there, and you don't pay too much attention because they go through it kind of easy. We were supposed to get down, and they were already tearing out the sides of the glider with their bayonets. They did that so they could get out faster, and so they could fire, too.

I didn't know what to do, and I looked around. I said, "We've got to get down. Nobody else is going down until I do." We could not radio the other gliders. There was no radio in the glider, but there was a telephone. There was communication through the wire that went down the tow line, the rope to the plane that was towing us. We could talk to the tow plane pilot. He could talk to the other plane by radio, and the pilot of that airplane could talk to the glider he was towing.

I called up, and I said, "Tell Eisenhower to go in first." (He was no relation to General Dwight D. Eisenhower.) He was on my wing. He was the next glider behind me, off to the side. To this day I wonder what the tow plane pilot thought of me, what he thought I was doing. Was I just cowardly and didn't want to go down there? Well, he knew I was going eventually. He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Just tell Eisenhower to go in first." He hemmed and hawed and hesitated, and he said, "Well, okay." I didn't know what he had said to anybody because I couldn't hear his radio, but I just kept watching the other glider. After a while I saw the rope fall

Litton: off, and he went on, and we went in together. I stayed right with him. In fact, we collided part way down. The wing tips got chewed up, but it was still a good landing.

I came back to the Times after the war to get a job, and they put me in an engraver's job where color sensitivity was the most important thing. I hated to turn it down even though I didn't really want it, but I didn't like to turn a job down. I had to go back to the personnel director and say, "I'm sorry, but I'm color blind. I couldn't do that."

The next thing they found was this circulation representative job in the circulation department. I was kind of a troubleshooter. I would answer complaints. I would go out in the middle of the night and make sure the papers were being put on the right corners for the boys to come and get. Down in Watts we'd always be mistaken for plainclothes policemen because we were cruising around looking for papers! [laughs] Lots of times we were called in to break up fights or to take away some guy that somebody was going to kill or to create peace because they all thought we were cops. It was a job that was absolutely, totally foreign to my makeup. I didn't like to have to urge people to sell, to take boys out soliciting from door to door for their paper routes, and calling people about why their paper wasn't on their porch that morning or calling on dealers in drug stores in little towns to try to get them to take more Times and fewer Examiners.

A guy named Benny Rose was my supervisor for part of that time. I came back one day, and he said, "How did you do this week?" I said, "I did pretty good in Caliente. I increased the circulation there by fifty percent." "Fifty percent!" he said, "Oh, great great! Wait until I tell Ray Marx." I said, "Yes, they were getting two papers. Now they are getting three!" [laughter]

Anyway, that's the kind of job it was. We were the liaison between the newspaper and the dealers, who were independent contractors, so we had to treat the dealers with kid gloves and yet urge them to be selling all the time and increasing their circulation. In terms of being up in the newspaper world and making good money and having advancement, it was really a very good job. The fellows who stayed with it are important executives at the Times now. Every job is creative in some ways because a job is what you make it. But, to me, there was nothing creative in that job. It was a great job to have because I wasn't interested in it. I would do it, and that would be it, and I'd forget about it.

The fact that I wasn't too interested made me, by default, quite popular among the dealers because I wasn't pushing them all the time. We got to be very good friends and, for that reason, they

Litton: had a kind of loyalty and devotion, and they would go out and do better without being pushed because I wasn't going to bother them! That was the job. I didn't expect to be at it forever, although being a lazy person I wasn't looking for anything else. I would have just stayed on there until the end of time, I suppose.

II INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT

Early Writing and Contacts with Conservation Groups During the 1940s and 1950s

Litton: My job with the Times took me out on the road a great deal, sometimes clear into other states, and I was exposed to things that I could produce articles about, and I started writing evenings and weekends. I did not write with the idea I was going to get a job anywhere else, but because there was something I wanted to say in print, and I wanted it to reach 400,000 people. So I would say it in the Times.

After a while, the Times began to depend on it. They'd see me [ask], "What have you for us this week?" It was always a big Sunday feature with lots of pictures, taking the front page of the second section and continuing inside. I've got a lot of those, the ones about Dinosaur [National Monument], Sierra Club issues, the Grand Canyon. Oh, gee, even the headlines were full of fire.

Lage: That's where you developed your interest in the Grand Canyon.

Litton: I had the interest, and that enabled me to put something into print. The repeated articles about Dinosaur National Monument, which were heavily illustrated, attracted the attention of Dave Brower, and that's why he first got in touch with me and asked me to join the Sierra Club.

Lage: I knew we'd get to the Sierra Club!

Litton: I said, "I'm not interested in the Sierra Club. I don't see that it's doing anything." At that point, I didn't see that it was.

Lage: Were you aware of the Sierra Club?

Litton: Yes, we kids had been invited to the Los Angeles meetings. The Sierra Club office used to be in the Philharmonic Auditorium off Pershing Square. Some of the old-timers are still around who were volunteers there. I guess it was all volunteer. They may have had one paid employee. Now the club office is out on Beverly Boulevard, and it's not the same situation. It's just kind of an office now with a little library room. The club had quite a number of rooms in the Philharmonic Auditorium. They would have meetings, and they invited us to come because, apparently, this stripling young nothing-of-an-organization [California Trails Association] that was coming along had come to their attention. The Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation published a magazine called Trails Magazine. I would put little articles in there and the organization's name was listed. This was when I was still in my late teens. I think probably they wanted to nip us in the bud, so that we wouldn't be taking over their functions. [laughs]

I can even remember some of the people who were steady names for many years in the club. Irene Charnock was one of them. She was there forever. I think she had a job there.

Lage: I don't know if she was employed or just volunteer.

Litton: Anyway, then there are the Gaymans, Evelyn and [her husband]. They come to everything. They are involved heavily in the Sierra Club. I think they live in Laguna Beach. They have been around forever, along with people like Beulah Edmiston. She's a go-getter and her husband is, too, Tasker and Beulah. In fact, their son, I believe, is an employee of the Sierra Club in Washington, D.C. or an employee of some conservation group.

Beulah Edmiston is largely responsible for saving the tule elk in the Owens Valley. The elk were originally in the San Joaquin Valley and were moved to the Owens Valley in order to keep them from being wiped out. The elk lived in the San Joaquin Valley and they still do live in the oil fields over there near Tupman and Kettleman City. Edmiston was the one who was behind the move to put the elk in the Owens Valley on the land of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. That's one of the fortunate aspects of the Owens River Aqueduct. The aqueduct took all the water so that people can't farm there anymore, and the land has stayed wilderness. It is available for game refuge, wildlife refuge.

Edmiston is also largely responsible, or one of the people responsible, for the wildflower preserves in the Antelope Valley. Los Angeles County has taken land back in the desert when it's tax-delinquent. Every time they get 160 acres or so, they make it into a wildflower preserve and fence it off and keep the cows out. There is a chance for the poppies to survive there, which used to be so

Litton: spectacular. That is a system of wildflower preserves, and I'm sure there is nothing else like it in the country, probably not in the world. Beulah is responsible for a lot of that. She is in a lot of things, and she is pretty hard-boiled, and some people don't get along with her. Tasker is much milder, and they both work very hard for conservation.

Anyway, that was that little spate of Sierra Club exposure, and we didn't see that they were doing anything except plan the next party. They were going to Harwood Lodge on Mount San Antonio. That was fine, but we were more on fire to stop these roads, and they didn't seem to care that much.

Lage: How did Brower convince you to join the Sierra Club?

Litton: Now, we are jumping way to 1952. I said, "I don't see that the Sierra Club does anything. I can do more by myself than I can in there." He says, "It's all going to be different now. I'm in charge." [laughs] Just like that! You could sort of read the handwriting on the wall. He may not have said he was going to be in charge, but he said that he was going to be there full time, and that the club was going to take a different turn because there was going to be somebody to operate it.

Anyway, I was happy to turn over pictures to Brower. The Bulletin was in a smaller format then [six inches by nine inches]. It was just as good, but it was small and had a lot of pages. I think the first photographs in the Bulletin were of Dinosaur, but Brower also used a story about Yosemite I had done for the Times.*

It must have been in '51. Nobody paid any attention to the Yosemite crowding. I was horrified when I went up there after the war, and it wasn't the way I remembered it as a kid. You'd see these people in the campgrounds. There was no separation or anything. If people were camped twenty feet apart and had their tents up, or their cars with the tents sticking out the side or their trailer, or camper, or whatever, somebody else would just go in between them and camp.

Lage: It was just like a parking lot.

*Martin Litton, "Yosemite's Fatal Beauty," Sierra Club Bulletin, October 1952 (a monthly issue), a reprint of the Los Angeles Times article and photographs.

"Once is Too Often: A Picture Story," Sierra Club Bulletin, June 1954, with photographs by Martin Litton and others.

Litton: Yes, and on busy weekends it was a parking lot. There was a lot of noise of canned music. They had swimming pools. The old village used to be a real eyesore. It was all these shacky old wooden buildings where they had a movie theater and all that, and that has since all been converted back to a meadow which looks perfectly natural. It was a hodgepodge, it was an urban situation.

I did the Yosemite story in the Times. The pictures were carefully contrived, so they made it look even worse than it was. The cars would drive out into the meadows in front of Half Dome. They would pack those meadows with cars for the fire fall, so they could watch the fire fall.

Lage: From their cars?

Litton: From their cars because the meadow was a place where you could see everything. Well, the fire fall is an abomination, too. But I will admit that when I was young I was very impressed by it. It was beautiful, but it also attracted people for the wrong reasons.

I did the story. This is interesting because in the circulation department every once in a while we would have a lunch. It was one of the ways for us to know that everything was going nicely, that we were in high favor with the big boss up top. Norman Chandler had a penthouse at the top of the Times building. It was the whole upper floor, and there were masseurs there who would massage him and all that sort of thing. Other executives could make use of all this, the hot sauna rooms and all that sort of thing. Norman had his own quarters there where he would sometimes stay over and spend the night. He would have his food brought in, or maybe the kitchens right there prepared it. It was an elegant situation.

He was kind of a reluctant publisher. He never really got into it with both feet, but he represented the company in a dignified way. He was Harry Chandler's son and Harry Chandler--oh, God, he was a regular old gangster. Otis Chandler, the present publisher, is certainly a lot more of a horn-locking type, too, than his father, Norman, was. Norman was rather reticent, and the times when you'd see him would be at the Christmas party when he would get up and tell you that there couldn't be much of a bonus this year because we hadn't made any money. [laughter]

Every once in a while, Mr. Marx would hold a meeting for the circulation department or the roadmen, as they were called (they were in on certain days of the week to bring in their reports). Mr. Marx was the ultimate boss. When he strode through the circulation department, all the typewriters started going--I mean the girls, you know. He would walk along, and he'd slap the tables as he went by.

Litton: He was just a picture of royalty. He was Mr. Boss. Everybody quaked in his presence, but they didn't need to. All these people are either long since retired or dead.

He would arrange for us to go up to Mr. Chandler's penthouse and have lunch sometimes. Our meeting would be a lunch in the Chandler penthouse. This would be the only time I would ever go up to the Chandler penthouse. The wall that faced the elevator would very frequently have my articles stuck up on it from the preceding Sunday. So I knew that Mr. Chandler thought that the article was okay. Of course, since I wasn't a regular reporter, they always had my by-line on the stories very prominently. Chuck Hillinger [a Times reporter] coined a name for me because I started the big hue and cry about the filth, the litter, around on the streets. Chuck Hillinger called me "Mr. Litterbug" from then on: "Here comes Mr. Litterbug!" [laughter]

I set up some crazy things. I put these big cartons out in the middle of the freeway. When I first went over to the police department, I said, "Could I have a motorcycle officer come over? I want to stage something here." I put a big carton out as if it had fallen off a truck, which they do all the time, and I had this motorcycle officer park his motorbike there and drag this carton off for the picture. It showed him cleaning up the street.

It made me feel pretty good to see that Mr. Chandler would have my stuff taken out of the paper by someone else and put there for his own enjoyment.

I did this story on Yosemite, and it really tore it all apart. I said that everything was wrong, and I talked about what should be done. I went to the superintendent of the park [Carl P. Russell] and I got him to say things I could quote.

The Times is a morning paper, but the bulldog edition came out the night before and was sold on the street corners by the street vendors. I would always look at the bulldog edition to see if there was anything wrong, and then I could call in and have them fix it before it came out in the home-delivered edition, which was the most important.

That night this article came out after I had given it to them on the city desk. It doesn't take a newspaper any time at all to get a story into print. The article was headlined, "Yosemite's Beauty Fast Disappearing." That was a perfect headline as far as I was concerned. The next morning's headline was, "Yosemite's Charm Attracts Millions." [laughter]

Lage: Somebody got to the story?

Litton: The only reason it was changed was that somebody, during the middle of the night, remembered that Norman Chandler was on the board of directors of the Yosemite Park and Curry Company, and they thought he might be offended by the story. Well, he wouldn't have been. It wouldn't have made a bit of difference to him. He wouldn't have cared one way or the other because the article didn't really blame the Yosemite Park and Curry Company. It just blamed all of us. It blamed the situation.

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Litton: That article came out later in the Sierra Club Bulletin, and so did some of the other articles taken from the Times.

Lage: This is in the fifties still, would you say?

Litton: Yes, that was in the early fifties. Dave Brower called me, and we got into the Dinosaur thing, which I had already been doing. I should give you those newspapers because they relate very closely to what the Sierra Club was involved in then. That was really the first fight, I think, that the Sierra Club got into, post-Muir, on a national scale where there was a visible, distinguishable issue. Now, the Sierra Club had been pressing for Kings Canyon National Park during the thirties. The club had been working in concert with the Forest Service. There wasn't polarization then. The Forest Service didn't want to give the canyon up. Just the same, the Sierra Club was not really out there waving the sword around. It was just working for it.

Lage: More quiet negotiations?

Litton: Yes, quiet negotiating until finally the Forest Service realized that the handwriting was on the wall and Kings Canyon National Park was going to happen [established 1940]. Then they really quit fighting it. I think Dinosaur postwar, let's say, was the first issue the Sierra Club really got tangled up in.

The club had never bothered with the coastal redwoods because that was the province of the Save-the-Redwoods League, which supposedly had done enough. We found it hadn't done enough, not because it hadn't wanted to, but because everything the Save-the-Redwoods League had done had been pretty much under the control of the logging companies. They permitted parks to happen where they wanted them because they owned it all, and they didn't have to give up anything until we came along with Congress. The state didn't determine where the redwoods parks would be. That was the Save-the-Redwoods League, and the only forest that the loggers would give up would be what they were willing to give up. The reason that they were willing to give it up was that they got this nice redwood highway up there in the early twenties, and it was the first road ever to go through. The

Litton: public was then able to go up and see what was there, and the logging companies didn't want them to see. Therefore, the redwoods parks all became little strips along the highway, which most of them still are.

The redwood parks got fattened around World War II. The Rockefeller Forest became a big addition then, as did Prairie Creek [Redwoods State Park]. Then during the war, they used a successful gimmick to get people to donate to buy Mill Creek Redwoods. They called it the National Tribute Grove, a tribute to our fallen men in the services.

The Save-the-Redwoods League had accomplished that. It was not responsible for the biggest of the redwoods parks, though, the Big Basin. That was done by the Sempervirens Club in San Jose.

The Save-the-Redwoods League had accomplished state redwood parks which are substantial, and they did it by engineering the state into setting up a system of matching funds. For every dollar the Save-the-Redwoods League collected, the state had to put in another buck. I guess that still prevails. The league is still trying to work at it, but people just don't seem to have the money. The state parks and the redwoods are not growing through the Save-the-Redwoods League substantially, as I see it now.

Lage: The costs have gone up so tremendously.

Litton: Yes, the cost has gone up tremendously, and also we've got this national park thing which would have cost us one-third if we had gotten it when it still had trees on it.

Lage: When did you get involved in the redwood issue?

Litton: When I was in the war, I corresponded a great deal with everybody--the Wilderness Society, Robert Sterling Yard. He was the spiritual leader of the Society for many, many years. He's dead now I'm sure.

Lage: Wasn't he with the National Parks Association?

Litton: Robert Sterling Yard, he may have been at one time or another but he was with the Wilderness Society. He personified it, and he edited "The Living Wilderness, I believe. I think of him as being of the older generation along with Sig [Sigurd] Olsen and Olaus Murie. I'm not sure what his age was, but he was well along. Another one who is dead now was Aubrey Drury. Aubrey Drury was Newton's brother, and he was the real spark in the Save-the-Redwoods League. He was its head for many, many years until he died.

Litton: Newton Drury, who had been involved in various things including being the director of the National Park Service for quite a while, took over the Save-the-Redwoods League's leadership. He was executive secretary, which I think John DeWitt is now. John was the stand-by all along there. Aubrey Drury and I carried on a lot of correspondence during the war when I was a second lieutenant.

Lage: Regarding the redwoods?

Litton: It had to be because that was the only thing he was involved in. I probably sent him ten dollars or something. In those days you got a personal letter for every dollar you contributed. I remember writing him quite a bit, and I've still got the letters, I'm sure. I was in the service. I was proselytizing, if that's the word, my fellow men around me to get them into these organizations. I would say, "Come on, here's a blank. Fill it out and send five dollars." I guess some of them did, and I guess the Sierra Club wasn't among them. The Save-the-Redwoods League, you knew what they were for. The Wilderness Society, you really knew what they were for.

I wanted the Sierra Club to be for the Sierra and, as you know, it doesn't touch that much anymore. That's one subject, but it's only one, and some of us have kept the club somewhat in line by fighting off the development of Mineral King and the Horsehoe Meadows ski development at Trail Peak, and then getting the Golden Trout Wilderness.

Sierra Club on Wrong Side: Litton's Influence on Mineral King and Trail Peak Policy

Litton: Mineral King was a thing the Sierra Club originally was on the wrong side of. The club wanted to develop skiing there. That was a policy of the club.

Then they directed the chapter, John Harper in the Kern-Kaweah Chapter, to work with the Forest Service to get a good development at Mineral King. Harper didn't want to; he didn't believe in it, but he was the chapter head for a lot of years.

Lage: Yes, the chapter directed him, not the national club.

Litton: No, the board did, the board of directors of the club.

Lage: The board did?

Litton: Yes, they directed the chapter to do it, and he was the chapter, so to speak. Harper did it reluctantly, but he got all involved in it and finally was working with the Forest Service people, and they came up with various plans--nothing like the [Walt] Disney [Productions, Inc.] thing that eventually emerged.

Then I got on the board of directors, and I stood up in righteous outrage at this terrible thing [May, 1965], and immediately the board voted the other way. I remember Ansel Adams saying, "I didn't know it was going to be in the national park." (The road, that is.) I said, "All you have to do is look at the map, dumbhead." I showed them a map, and here we were going to ruin Sequoia National Park for this silly thing that the Sierra Club advocated. Why, then it went the other way around, everybody voted the other way.

Lage: Yes, I think Dave Brower mentions that in his oral history, giving you complete credit for turning the thing around.

Litton: Well, Dave had just stood up and talked pro on the thing.

Lage: Yes, he admits that.

Litton: Then after I raised hell, why, he stood up again, and he said, "I want to take back everything I said." Those were his words.

Lage: How did they respond? Your style must have been very different from others on the board.

Litton: I don't know that it was. I say I raised hell, but there were only a few times. Well, one of the times is rather continuous on Diablo Canyon, but only a few times I really got mad. I think I was polite and as reasonable as most.

Lage: In the case of Mineral King did you feel really mad?

Litton: Mineral King? I couldn't imagine that the Sierra Club would want to dissect Sequoia National Park with a highway to a ski area.

Lage: You did persuade a lot of people at that time.

Litton: I persuaded them all right then and there, although they hadn't paid any attention to the issue before. A lot of these decisions were made by default. I mean they just would not assent. If somebody came along and made an argument against Mineral King, they ordered the chapter to oppose it. [laughs] That's when John Harper, I think, left the club or thought about leaving it. I think he's out of it now, but my god, they made him do this. He didn't want to do it in the first place. They made him do it for years, work up these plans, and then they told him to stop, and they said, "We're against it, we don't want anything to do with it."

Litton: Trail Peak, which is at Horseshoe Meadows, is really part of the Kern Plateau. I was always vitally interested in the Kern Plateau because that's the area where I was first exposed to real wilderness when I was a kid. Another kid and I rented a burro for seventy-five cents a day and went on this hike to Mount Whitney. That was the thing that changed my life. I fought hard for the Golden Trout thing. In fact, I flew Bob Jones, the present environmental writer for the L.A. Times up there. Mary Ann Eriksen and I got him out of his office and got him on the way. I worked with her pretty heavily when she was with the club.

We got Jones in a plane, and we took him up to Mammoth and Mono Lake and made him look at all these various problems. On the way back, I said, "I want to show you where I first found the wilderness, hiking this barren, hot slope all day on the east side of the Sierra." Not a drop of water until we came to this summit, beautiful Summit Meadow, and we were more dead than alive from heat and exhaustion. Suddenly it was cool, and the sun was going down and here was water, ice cold, delicious water, and I fell on my face--we both did--and immersed ourselves in it. It was a terrible ordeal dragging a burro up the hill. We should have taken our stuff without him because he didn't want to go!

I flew along, and I said, "Bob, I want you to see this." I angled the plane just right, so he would see Summit Meadow, right on the crest of the Sierra where I had first gone over and looked at Monache Meadows and the whole beautiful sight of the Kern Plateau region. Just as we flew over it, out drove a four-wheel-drive camper right across the meadow. It's an ORV [off-road vehicle], and that's what the Forest Service has been allowing there. In the new [1981 California Wilderness] bill, the [Phil] Burton bill, if it gets through, they have gerrymandered it something awful. It's a bad boundary for the Monache Meadows area. In fact, it didn't include Monache Meadows because there were a couple of trees there, and Burton tries to please the labor unions. If the unions say they need a job cutting down a tree, why, the wilderness can go to hell. I'm afraid I'm a little bit cynical about some people who have done some great things for us. On the other hand, we're not their only motivation.

Lage: Are you speaking about Phil Burton?

Litton: Yes, Burton. They were blaming him in Washington because the labor unions were pushing him to leave the trees out of the wilderness, so they could cut them down and have jobs.

Lage: You think he's beholden to others as well as the conservation groups?

Litton: Oh, yes, he makes no bones about it. The poor word that is used for that is liberalism. I don't call that liberalism in my dictionary. But, yes, he's anxious to have the labor vote, I'm sure. Anyway, to see my ultimate wilderness suddenly intruded upon by this camper truck was just about the last straw.

When I was on the board, Trail Peak came up. The Toiyabe Chapter, based in Reno, had decided that the skiing development was okay. We tried to stop the road going up there to Horseshoe Meadow. At least it stopped where it is now forever and ever because we've got a wilderness right next to it. In fact, the wilderness goes right around it. The road is an intrusion into it. But this group called CIRC got together and financed the skiing thing. The group must have made quite a pitch to some member of the Toiyabe Chapter, which is where Dick and Marjory Sill held sway for a long time.

I don't know what the situation is now, but at every board meeting there would be a consent calendar. These were the things that we didn't have to discuss because we would vote them in automatically. The items were presented by the staff or by someone in the club or by a chapter. These were items that didn't need to be argued over because we would automatically adopt whatever it said there, and that would become a resolution.

I went down this calendar, and one of the things on the consent calendar was that the Sierra Club endorsed and advocated the development of Trail Peak for downhill skiing. [sighs] Oh!

Lage: Now, when was this?

Litton: It was probably contemporaneous with Diablo Canyon; maybe around 1970.* This consent calendar item was going to be okayed. I blew my top, and I went to Mike McCloskey, who had gotten all this stuff together. I know Dave was out then, and Mike was the executive director because he brought the consent calendar in. Well, board members are automatically going to vote for certain things, and you don't need to discuss them because some chapter has taken care of it, and they have investigated, and they have decided what the Sierra Club ought to do. Well, that's okay, if we're going to petition Congress to save the bald eagle or something like that. All of a sudden, we are going to say it's okay to put skiing up on the Kern Plateau with all the lifts?

*Trail Peak was first discussed at the September, 1967, Board of Directors meeting.

Litton: I went to Mike and I said, "What is this doing on here?" He said, "The Toiyabe Chapter came in, and we usually go by what the chapters recommend." Lewis Clark had been their emissary on this. The Toiyabe Chapter had presented it to him, and he had brought it before the board in the form of part of the consent calendar. I said, "No, no, that won't go!"

If anybody objects to an item on the consent calendar, it gets taken off, and it's voted on. I said it was an outrage that the Sierra Club would endorse a thing like this. I said, "If we're not going to oppose the thing, that's one thing. Then we don't have to say anything. But let's not go running around like we did at the time of Echo Park and say we don't need the dam because of all the wonderful oil shale, and because there is coal, and because there is nuclear power." That's what the club was doing, and Brower was involved in that, too. That would always bother me and, I wasn't the only one who thought, "Wait a minute now, we might not like what we are doing here later on."

Everybody voted against the Trail Peak proposal except Lewis Clark, and he didn't think he properly could because he was the one who had proposed it for the chapter. Now, he wasn't from that chapter, but they had given it to him to propose. Let's say ninety-nine percent of the things that I proposed or stood for went through. I don't want to set myself apart from anyone else, there were lots of others who had the same thing happen. Diablo Canyon was the rare exception, and maybe that's why it became so divisive because those in opposition to the board were not going to give up.

These were people you could always count on to be on the right side of things, actively. One person was Fred Eissler. There were others as various people came and went on the board. There were also the reasonable people who wanted to sit down and reason it out: Should we do this? Should we offer that? Should we have an alternative to this? Can we really oppose that because there are a lot of people who want it? My feeling was that if we didn't want it, it didn't matter how many other people wanted it.

Club's Failure to Save Glen Canyon or Concentrate Activities on the Sierra Nevada

Litton: If we hadn't believed in ourselves, we never would have stopped the Dinosaur thing. If we had believed in ourselves enough, we would have stopped Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River. We just didn't think we had that kind of strength, and yet the snowball was already rolling. We had the public's confidence in us, and we had the nation

Litton: on our side as a result of Dinosaur. We could have carried that momentum on right through the whole Colorado River system.* I don't mean there never would have been any pressures, but there wouldn't have been any dam or reservoir once we got the great Escalante National Park. Escalante National Park was what they were going to call the entire region of Glen Canyon back in the days of FDR and Helen Gahagan Douglas [California congresswoman]. It was all on the maps as a park project, the whole blooming thing. With Escalante National Park there couldn't have been a dam there anymore than there can be in the Grand Canyon National Park now.

Of course, the parks that they were going to put the dams in were not in the national park system at that time. Since then Grand Canyon National Park has been stretched out somewhat, although land was deleted for the Havasupai.

I also thought that the Sierra Club should still concentrate to whatever degree is necessary on the Sierra Nevada. I certainly didn't object to the club going worldwide with conservation because somebody has to lead, and there really isn't anybody out there pulling it all together in an overall way. The World Wildlife Fund has one kind of interest, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature has another; they all have their fields. But they're not saying, "Let's keep it all wild, what there is." For example, we need to keep the Amazon Basin protected until the world's population begins to go the other way and all the demands are off; there's wishful thinking for you.

According to Barry Commoner, there won't be any people on earth in about eighteen years because on the first Earth Day [in 1970] it was going to be twenty-five or thirty years, and that time is running out. That was a prediction on Earth Day, that we had a certain length of time left on the earth. I remember I got on a T.V. show once with Don Sherwood, and he was doing the questioning. It was on the anniversary of Earth Day, I guess, and he asked me how long we had on this earth. Some little crazy thing went on in me, and I said, "Twenty-three and a half years." He said, "How can you get it down to twenty-three and a half years? How can you be so precise?" I said, "Because six months ago it was twenty-four years." [laughter]

Sherwood also arranged for us to take on PG&E on Diablo Canyon on television. Sherwood asked the questions. He was, of course, on our side.

*In 1956, after successfully opposing dams in Dinosaur National Monument, the Sierra Club Board of Directors determined not to oppose the Glen Canyon Dam, since it lay outside any national park or monument.--ed.

III THE REDWOODS CAMPAIGN

Early Interest in the Redwoods and the Redwood Creek Idea

Litton: I took Don Sherwood in the plane up to the redwoods, and we looked at the freeway routes. He'd come on the radio the next morning--and everybody tuned him in--and say, "Well, I just went up and saw where they were going to build a freeway where there aren't any cars."

After he stood around the redwoods for a couple of hours he said--we were always talking about alternate routes--"Why any route?" He was the first one who said that. He said, "Why any route? There's nobody here. There's no cars." A car would go by every half hour through Jed Smith [Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park] on the highway to Grants Pass [Oregon]. They didn't go by often, and usually they were lumber trucks or logging trucks. Sherwood got involved in these issues that we've been involved in.

Lage: I want to go back and ask you some specific things about the redwoods. There are a lot of things that are known about the redwoods, and I want to fill in the gaps.

Litton: There are a lot of things that are not known correctly, too.

Lage: Well, that might be, and you can correct some now. I want to get your perspective. What was your first involvement with the redwoods, aside from your wartime letters.

Litton: I don't remember when I first saw a natural redwood tree growing in a natural condition. Yes, I do. It was in Muir Woods [National Monument]--which is not really a very good way to see the redwoods, as you know. It's pretty busy and, at least the last time I was there, there was a lot of pavement. It must have been Muir Woods because I'm quite sure that before the war I never went any farther up that way.

Litton: When I got to Sunset, of course, not only was it the thing to do because it was part of the territory I had to cover, but it was also closer because I was then living near the [San Francisco] bay. The first time I really got worked up on the redwoods and decided Redwood Creek would be the place for a redwood national park was when I went up on several trips with my family. I usually took my family so we'd work it out at vacation time, Thanksgiving vacation, that sort of thing, because I needed them as models in the pictures. Sunset always had the involvement of people, the family, and my family made a pretty good family. What they were doing out there all the time without any dad in the pictures, I don't know! [laughter]

Lage: How many children do you have?

Litton: Four; we had only two for the early part of it, and then we had two more. Three children are in some of the pictures.

Lage: The Sunset magazine issue that you are talking about was October '60?

Litton: Yes, that was October 1960, and I had not had any real deep involvement in the redwoods. There were lots of other things, and I felt the redwoods were taken care of. Why worry about them? I went up to do that big story on the redwoods--it was just time to do one--for Sunset. That was a big story, and the research on it spawned a lot of other stories later on. You could still use the same pictures. Not those pictures, but others that were obtained at that time.

I did a lot of exploring around, and the worst thing I saw was this freeway being built--dug, slammed--through Humboldt Redwoods State Park. The Sierra Club used a lot of those pictures later in the redwoods fight. They used one of these great big fold-out sheets to show this freeway construction. The bulldozer is just pushing its way right through the park.

Lage: You saw that happening?

Litton: It was happening the first time I went up there, yes.

Lage: How did you find Redwood Creek on that trip?

Litton: It was just a matter of exploring around. You could hardly miss it. You could take the Bald Hills Road up, and naturally I was going to do that because it gave you a good overview of Prairie Creek, the lower end of it. There was Redwood Creek, and there was this ridge-to-ridge forest. There was a whole mountaintop that had redwoods that had never been touched. We could truly say that there were several intact stream watersheds there, tributaries of Redwood Creek, which is more or less a river for that part of the world. Prairie Creek is a tributary of Redwood Creek. It comes from the

Litton: north. You could see virgin tributaries where there had been no logging at all from the top on down. Little Lost Man Creek is one of those still. We thought we rescued that by putting it in the national park, but in the very last few days, just out of spite, Arcata Redwood [Company] went up there and logged out twenty acres right at the top, right at the head of the creek.

Lage: You discovered Redwood Creek then. Did you have the idea then that the creek should be the core of a park?

Litton: Yes, and then I began looking into it, and I came up with such things as the Edgington report of 1920. Edgington was hired by the Park Service to go out and locate various areas that could be considered for a redwood national park. Helen Gahagan Douglas and her cohorts came up during the Roosevelt administration with the idea of redwood purchase units which would eventually become a great national forest. All the redwoods had to be bought back from the private owners who had stolen them from the public domain in the first place. They weren't the original owners, but they were their heirs, those who had taken over. So the redwoods would have come back into our hands by money. It wouldn't have cost much then, and the whole idea was that it would be a great national forest running the whole length of the [northern California] coast. Maybe that wouldn't have been too good. The Forest Service might have sold off the trees! [laughs] At least we would have had a chance to save some of it. It would have been in public hands.

I remembered that, and I looked at Redwood Creek and explored it a little bit and then came out with this idea. I don't remember all the evolution of it, but the Sierra Club was not at that time involved in redwoods at all. The Sunset article was the first exposure, I suppose. Because I was in the club and on the board, I could carry this on. I don't remember how it was brought up on the board.

Oh, the King Range [in Humboldt County]; that was a matter of interest, too. I began using borrowed airplanes to fly people up and land them on the beach there. In fact, Doris Leonard wrote a paper as a result of going up and flying. Doris, George Collins, and other people went. I think Dick Leonard was along that time, and so were other people involved in the Sierra Club.

The King Range had a piece of wild coast that we had to save. We got all wrapped up in that, and at the same time, we were looking at the redwoods themselves. The King Range wasn't primarily redwoods because the backside of the mountains where the redwoods had been was all logged off. On the coastal side it was just Douglas fir and grass and shrubs and the usual things you'd see. Redwoods only very infrequently go clear down to the ocean.

- Lage: I think before this, you brought Chet Brown, of the National Park Service, out.
- Litton: That was quite a while after. That took place when the National Park Service got interested because of the pressure for the redwoods that I think the Sierra Club had generated.
- Lage: Wasn't that '63 though?
- Litton: Yes, but that redwood article appeared in Sunset in October 1960.
- Lage: Yes, I know.
- Litton: All of these things started happening in the late fifties. The National Park Service team was composed of Chet Brown and Paul Fritz. Chet Brown is dead. Paul Fritz had gone on with the Park Service in Alaska. Fritz recently resigned and became a land planning consultant. He's in Boise [Idaho] now.

Sierra Club Policy on the Redwoods

- Litton: Ed Wayburn adopted the Redwood Creek idea right off.* He was on the [Sierra Club] board and, at times, he was president. There really wasn't any argument about the Redwood Creek idea within the club. It was just lucky that we got off on the right foot. If some of the people on the club board who were closely aligned with other organizations had suddenly gotten into this, and if there had been a redwood national park proposal (which there wasn't) and if we had gotten off on the wrong foot through various sympathies, concerns, and loyalties,

*Early in its campaign for a Redwood National Park in the 1960s, the Sierra Club proposed a site focusing on Redwood Creek and its watershed area, in Humboldt County, California. The Save-the-Redwoods League, however, endorsed a smaller park plan focusing on the Mill Creek area to the north in Del Norte County. The split between the two conservation groups, sometimes a bitter one, may have delayed passage of the Redwood National Park bill and resulted in a compromise park boundary satisfying neither group in 1968. The park was significantly enlarged in the second Redwood National Park Act in 1978, which added the watershed of Redwood Creek, by then extensively clearcut. See Susan Schrepfer, "Conflict in Preservation," Journal of Forest History, April 1980, for further background.--ed.

- Litton: and gone for the Jedediah Smith Mill/Creek thing, then we could have had another big fight in the club like we did on Diablo Canyon. If it had gone wrong in the beginning, some of us wouldn't have let it stay wrong. On the other hand, since we originated Redwood Creek, nobody came up against us.
- Lage: It seems like at first the club came out for both the Redwood Creek and the Mill Creek ideas.
- Litton: Well, yes, we didn't mind the park including both as long as we got all of Redwood Creek that we needed. We weren't going to take it up to the head of the creek, but through the part that had redwoods in it. It was okay to add that land around Mill Creek. We didn't mind that.
- Lage: Do you recall how the club later dropped Mill Creek? Wasn't there some dissension on the board?
- Litton: There wasn't any dissension within the club that I know of.
- Lage: How about Dick Leonard?
- Litton: Well, Dick Leonard, of course, but he's not in the club.
- Lage: I thought he was then.
- Litton: What I mean is that if there was another organization for which Dick had respect that was going the other way, he would rather have the club brought around to go their way.
- Lage: The Save-the-Redwoods League?
- Litton: The Save-the-Redwoods League; I said the Save-the-Redwoods League is fine, but those properties are the state's. If anybody is going to take care of them, it ought to be the state. The state should save its own parks. You shouldn't go along and have a fake redwood national park just to take in some upper watershed that the state failed to think about when they made Jed Smith [Redwoods State Park]. That was what the League was doing. They didn't want a real redwood national park. The League wanted the federal government to take over the state parks. The reason for that was not that the federal government would do as well or better than the state, but Newton Drury [executive secretary, Save-the-Redwoods League] saw that as a way of getting federal money to buy up Mill Creek, which he couldn't afford to do.

The Mill Creek situation was not the same as Bull Creek. The soils there are entirely different. Perhaps the logging is more careful or more enlightened by Miller-Rellim Lumber Company.

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Litton: Despite the very substantial and damaging logging that had been done in the headwaters of Mill Creek, when the heavy floods of '64 came along the park wasn't affected at all. There wasn't any flooding, there wasn't any washing, no trees knocked over or anything. It still looks as good as it ever did, except for the additional traffic that [the Howland Hill road] gets along Mill Creek. But that hasn't really hurt it much.

It proves we were right, that we didn't need to put the Mill Creek area in the park, although it would have been fine to have the entire watershed and to get the [Miller-Rellim] logging mill out of there. I thought the state should do it.

Lage: The club seemed to be interested in the Klamath River for a while. Aren't a lot of the pictures from the first book* taken from the Klamath River?

Litton: Yes, that's right because originally the federal investigators of 1920 [The Edgington Report] considered the Klamath River the place for redwoods, for the national park. It had a great river running through it and virgin forests. You know, the last redwoods campaign was not really a pitch for a redwood national park primarily. It was just to save the redwoods, to stop them from being ruined. Of course, an obvious answer was to get a national park because that could happen more quickly than the state could get little pieces and put them together.

In The Last Redwoods the best statement that has ever been made for the redwoods is written. It's really beautiful writing--Francois Leydet. When we explored the redwoods and did it thoroughly, we naturally couldn't overlook the Klamath because there were some tributary streams there that still had some beautiful trees on them, even though logging was going on heavily in the Klamath area, and it's pretty well all logged out now.

Blue Creek, which has since been logged, was intact then. We wanted so much to do something about the Klamath. After the chance location of the world's tallest tree where we slapped any old tree and said, "This has got to be it," I thought we should go up to Blue Creek, a tributary of the Klamath River. We could find the tallest tree there because, as far as we can tell, those trees were in the same class as those in Redwood Creek.

As you know, after the discovery of the world's tallest tree at 368-point-something feet, the tree got shorter. That happened when Redwood Creek flooded and built up two or three feet of silt around the base of the tree, so then the tree was that much shorter above the ground.

*Francois Leydet, The Last Redwoods (Sierra Club, 1963).

Litton: While we were working for the park, after the discovery of the tree, there was a great deal of bitter feeling on the part of us who worked so hard to get ridge top to ridge top. The logging was going down to the worm [down to the narrow streamside extension--1/4 mile on each side of Redwood Creek--running south (upstream) for a couple of miles from the main body of the park]--just to hurt the park and to make it less desirable. I think it was Arcata [Redwood Company] who took out another twenty acres of trees right along Redwood Creek.

Do you know the Howard Libbey Tree named for the head of the Arcata Redwood Company. The only thing that really is appropriate about that name is the tree is dead at the top. [laughter] So are most of the big old redwood trees. If they stop growing, or if something has intruded upon the area to change the nature of the environment, they will be spike tops, as they are called. It is still a healthy tree, but they are not as tall as they were because the piece at the very top is dead. The sap just can't come up anymore. The tree hasn't got the strength.

It's an excuse for cutting down all of the big trees, even though they might live for hundreds of years more. They say, "That tree is not doing anything." They cut down these trees [at Redwood Creek], and one of those trees was 390 feet long, and that doesn't count the stump. Now, that made it twenty-five feet taller than the tallest tree, and nobody knows really today how many other trees there may be standing that are taller than that. There is not likely to be anything much taller because the 390-foot tree was growing on a small flat in a stream bottom, which is the kind of area which produced the tallest trees.

On the other hand, the flats at Orick and, even more so, the flats at the mouth of the Eel River in the vicinity of Ferndale, between some of those little places where the Eel River goes out to sea and there is that great flat plain of grazing land (dairy land and grass)--once that was a redwood forest. There is hardly any question that the trees had to be over four hundred feet tall on the flats. There are records which may not be accurate, but it's claimed that some of the trees at Orick were 450 feet tall before they were cut.

Those were the first places to be cut, and they weren't cut for lumber. They were just cut so the trees would be out of the way because it was flat ground that could be cultivated. It could be used. The hills were the last to be cut. That's where the redwoods stayed because they didn't bother to get rid of them. They cut redwoods down originally to get rid of them, then they'd burn them up and make farmland so they could subsist. There is a picture of one of these places in the book The Last Redwoods--one of Phil Hyde's black-and-white pictures--where you see this two-story farmhouse.

Litton: It looks like a toy along side this burned snag of a redwood tree that they never cut down. Apparently, it wasn't in the way, and it certainly wasn't any good for lumber because it had been burned into a snag. It stands, I think, in the picture four or five times as tall as the house, even though it's just stump. The width of that stump, as I recall, is about twice as wide as the house standing alongside of it.

As you fly over that area, you can see a number of those snags. It would be fun to go down and get right up to them.

Lage: Did the club drop the Klamath River proposal because it was logged?

Litton: The Klamath River had been, back in the early twenties, regarded as the perfect place for a national park. There were all kinds of impediments to that because the Klamath was used for commerce. In fact, until recently, tugboats went right up from the ocean to drag the log rafts down. I have lots of pictures of that. The club's new idea of a redwood national park never seriously considered the Klamath. In the book, The Last Redwoods, there are lots of things that are not dealing with any area that's proposed as a national park. In fact, there are things shown that are in Scotia, or the redwood region, or on the beach.

Lage: The Klamath River proposal was never seriously considered?

Litton: It never came up seriously. We drew the line around the so-called ninety thousand acres [the club's proposed park in the 1960s], and we got to one point where we said, "Let's have a moratorium for one day on the Vietnam War. If we take one day's expenditures in Vietnam, we'll have all the redwoods we could ever want--the whole thing, every bit of it--and still have the trees." We ended up buying the land for more without the trees than we would have had to pay originally with the trees, even in the sixties. With this last thing [the 1978 Redwoods National Park Act], I don't know what that's going to cost, but you're buying stumps in order to get some watershed protection eventually.

Lage: Let's go back to this trip in the summer of '63.

Litton: Yes, we had already been working on the redwoods then for quite some time. I don't know when it was I first went up for Sunset. It wasn't in 1960 though.

Lage: It was earlier?

Litton: It had to be because the picture that is on the cover of the October 1960 issue is from the fall, and the only way I could have made that picture was at least one year before, during the fall. Sunset takes

Litton: four or five months to get into production. So the picture had to have been made at least a year before, and it might have been two or three years before. I don't know exactly when those pictures for the article were made, but the whole idea of the redwoods park, for my part, came about when I was up there on several occasions getting ready to do this article. I saw Redwood Creek, and I don't know who else might have. I don't know that anyone did. I probably just talked it up afterwards with people, such as Ed Wayburn. I flew them around.

We called the Redwood Creek area "the lawn" then because it was continuous trees as far as you could see in a picture, if you turned your back on what was going on over the ridge on the Klamath. Of course, we hadn't yet proposed it for a national park. The logging company would have cut it without any controls at all. The fact that we did propose it may have instigated some of the cutting that happened immediately or very early in the campaign. The company may not have gotten around to some of that until later if we had not come up with the national park idea. They were trying to hurt the park proposal. They were trying to make it unsuitable for a park. They would go in, and they would take out a chunk where ordinarily they would work slowly across the region. They went out of their way to go and take trees out of Bridge Creek which we said had virginal characteristics. They logged a mountain of redwoods that was the only one left where you had an entire hill with virgin forest right over the top of it from one side to the other. There wasn't anything else like that in the redwoods anywhere. There wasn't a hilltop that had redwoods on it that hadn't been logged through and left with just a few spikes sticking up here and there.

It looks very ragged around Prairie Creek, for example, because on the park side of the ridge the trees will go right up to the ridge. But the ones on the other side are gone, so half of the skyline is missing up there. You know, there's a tree and a tree and a tree, and that's about it.

Lage: Did Wayburn respond with the kind of vision that you would hope for?

Litton: I think so. I know he always held to Redwood Creek very strongly. Redwood Creek was it; there was not going to be any compromise. If we could additionally have had anything else farther north, it would have been fine. The only thing that I could say softened us up was that, at the end, someone exerted influence on the congressmen. John P. Saylor [congressman from Pennsylvania] was probably the principal mover. He came out to California. He toured the redwood area by helicopter, along with a lot of others.

The Redwood Parks, the National Park Service, and the Logging Industry

Litton: Someone worked very hard on congressmen in Washington on the redwood issue, and I think I know who. They weren't in the Sierra Club. Oh, they could have been, but not any of us who were working for the park. It could be someone who fancied himself a great judge or arbitrator. At the end, it began to look as if we were going to get nothing unless we accepted a proposal without the upper slopes of Redwood Creek. We did get some Redwood Creek area lower down but not farther back, so you can't look at anything without seeing destruction. There is no place you get a big view of anything in Redwood National Park that isn't partially destroyed, unless you are right in the midst of a grove where you can't see out. If you get on any ridge or any high place in Redwood National Park there is logging, there is destruction.

That's really true in the state parks, too. I guess Jed Smith and Prairie Creek have the best. It is true that at the end, just to get something, we had to kind of knuckle under to accept part of the Mill Creek area. Actually, if Mill Creek hadn't been in the proposal, the park would have cost less. Congressmen were always talking about how much money would be available. It looked like \$127 million would be the cost to get the whole thing originally. That amount of money was beyond the limits talked about in budget committees and so forth.

We ended up accepting this strip of land [in 1968] with the beaches, the freeways, the real estate, the pastures, the farms, the fences, and everything else that ended up in the Redwood National Park. It was mostly stumps. When they say we have a Redwood National Park at 58,000 acres, 30,000 of those acres are Jedediah Smith [Redwoods State Park] and Prairie Creek [Redwoods State Park] which were already state parks. They are not in the national park. We've got a national park of 28,000 acres of which not over 7,000 acres are old-growth redwood forests. The rest of it has been converted to pasture or is paved or is stumps.

Lage: They've enlarged the park since then.

Litton: It has been enlarged since. It got enlarged in 1978. We had the park in '68. In ten years they had cut trees from most of the land that was added. Some of what was added was cut even before the original park, but it needed to go in the park system. There were little islands here and there that had been cut along in the Emerald Mile section [south of the park] and around Bridge Creek. Quite a bit of the land, if it had gone in the park in the beginning [in 1968], would have been cut over. But it was so much worse ten years later when they had had unbridled cutting and had been doing anything they

Litton: wanted, and had done some cutting inside the park. They actually just misestimated where the park boundary line was. They said, oh, they didn't notice that, that that was where the line was. So they got a few trees out of the park, mainly out of meanness.

The loggers did the thing with the peanut log.* They set off on this great public-spirited hegira to the White House with the peanut log. I figured out how much the log was worth. As finished lumber it came out to several hundred thousand dollars. Yet that log carved into the peanut shape could never be used again because in shaping it they had used sandblasters. In sandblasting it they embedded sand into it, so it would have ruined any saws that they ever tried to put it through in a mill. It was never going to become anything. I don't know what did become of it. What they might have done was to drill holes in it and blow it up for grapestakes. They could have put charges in it, but I don't think it ever came to lumber. It was a total waste, to say nothing of the waste of the energy to get it back there. To waste a whole tree that could have become these precious boards that they're so fond of was really a funny way to approach a subject.

Lage: It was a funny way to dramatize something that they're interested in.

Litton: Yes, it showed they didn't give a hoot about anything. When they talked jobs, the loggers are out of jobs half the year anyway. You can only log in the dry season. When winter comes, the logging camps close down, and the loggers are on welfare or whatever. It's a transient population anyway. It's not the home folks that are in logging. You can't stay in one place when you're cutting down all of the trees. You've got to move somewhere else.

Lage: That's right; they're going anyway. I want you to tell me about the trip where you took Chet Brown [of the National Park Service] and showed him around the redwoods. I want to know if you introduced him to Redwood Creek or was he interested in it before?

Litton: I think that on the trip you are talking about, Chet Brown was one person. The Park Service had several people involved. Brown was the team leader. The Park Service sent out investigative crews because the pressure was on from below or from above. I took Pete McCloskey, my congressman, up there in a plane. I didn't own a plane. I used the Sunset plane for everything. We spent the whole

*To dramatize their hostility to expansion of the Redwood National Park in 1978, logging industry workers hauled a giant redwood log, carved in the shape of a peanut, from California to Washington, D.C.--ed.

Litton: day tramping the redwoods, and we did some pretty hard going, too. We went over the big logs and all that in the Redwood Creek area. McCloskey came back all on fire about it. Now, I don't remember what he did as a result of that.

Pete McCloskey and I did that all by ourselves. What I'm trying to get at here is to try to remember why the National Park Service got involved, or how the redwood park problem got to them so that they did something. It was the Sierra Club that caused it to happen. It was us, going to the Secretary of the Interior. We went back to Washington, D.C. week after week after week flying on Sierra Club money--Ed Wayburn; a couple of times Francis Farquhar, Dave Brower, me, Will Siri, one or two other people I can't remember. We would go back there and sit down in Stewart Udall's office [Secretary of the Interior, 1961-69] and give him the pitch.

Lage: When was this?

Litton: During the time we were trying to get the government involved in the redwood parks issue. We wanted to tell them we wanted a national park because the state was not going to be able to save this place, and it should be a national park; it should be saved. I remember one thing that we said to Udall because already the loggers were starting to point out, in a roundabout way, that there wasn't much redwood left. They were saying there was plenty of wood for ten thousand years, but on the other hand if you take the trees away for a park, there isn't going to be any. Well, we were only going to take about one percent of the original, so where was the rest of it?

Udall mouthed one of their lines, but he just did it because he had to. He had to come back at us with what they were saying. He said, "Do you realize that if you gentlemen get this park that you want with all the state parks and all that, that more than half of the standing redwoods remaining will be in parks?"

We said, "Mr. Secretary, if we get no national park at all, it's only a matter of a very few years until one hundred percent of all the standing redwoods are in parks." [laughter] That was the right rejoinder for that.

I'm a little vague on when things happen, but let's do the tree slapping. That took place probably--a wild guess--six months before the National Geographic came out about the discovery of the world's tallest tree. We wanted the Geographic to be the discoverers of it. In kind of an oblique way they kind of took credit for it because they published the article that announced it. [The "discovery" story is fiction but served its purpose. ML, 11/30/81.]* Everyone said the Geographic found this great tree--great! Anybody could find it, but just let's save it.

*See Melville Bell Grosvenor, "World's Tallest Tree Discovered," National Geographic, July, 1964, vol. 126, #1, pages 1-9.

Litton: The Park Service came out before the National Geographic became involved. They got in touch with me, and they got in touch with others, I guess. They came down to Sunset. We would go out to lunch. We'd talk. I would pull out the maps and say, "Here's what we've got to do."

The Park Service also went up and talked to the lumber companies and talked to other people. They did a lot of exploring on their own. They got very much involved in the Van Duzen drainage [located southeast of Eureka]. Pacific Lumber Company, I think it was, had a fairly good stand of virgin forest there with several creeks. It was continuous, and it was big and maybe a little of it is still there. It didn't make a national park because it was really all just on one big slope overlooking Eureka. We wanted something where you could have kind of an enclosure and feel that you were away from all that stuff.

The original Valley of the Giants, what's left of that, is now a city park in Eureka. There are virgin redwoods for one block--what's left of the ones you can read about in the Van Dyke book [Valley of the Giants].

I flew the Park Service people around somewhat. The Geographic knew nothing about this. I believe the National Park Service brought the Geographic in because they wanted some public exposure, and some research money.

Lage: I think the National Geographic funded the Park Service's survey.

Litton: That's right. The Geographic did some of the survey later. They didn't do it originally. It wasn't until the Park Service had a case to make, and then the Geographic stepped in because then they began to get interested. I didn't know the Geographic people then; I do now very well. Some of them have been on trips with us. The Geographic has gotten away from its "neutrality" a little now, if you saw the current issue about the coal in the Four Corners [located where the four corners of the states of Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico meet]. The article got pretty tough. Francois wrote that article, too--Francois Leydet who wrote our best Sierra Club books. I flew them all around. It doesn't mention that, but I flew them around for all those aerial pictures of Warner Valley. I was flying when they took the one with Zion [National Park, Utah] in the background and also the picture of the tower where they wanted to build the coal-fired plant in Southwest Utah. I got Dewitt Jones in the airplane and maneuvered it right over so you would see Zion National Park there.

Litton: I got acquainted with the Park Service people. They went off, and they had nothing else to do for a long time but to study and explore the redwoods. As you know, the Park Service came around to Redwood Creek. But there were a lot of pressures on the Park Service from Newton Drury because he really wanted to save Mill Creek, and he figured the federal money was now the only way to do it, although it didn't really need saving all that much. As I say, it was already cut, and what they did get into the park was very scrubby little stuff that's way back, the dry country. They omitted all the part that the loggers still wanted to cut. Where all this brush was, they put that in. It was pretty silly.

It's a national park now. It's a little detached piece adjacent to a state park. I feel that the worst thing to do is to redesignate state parks as a national park and pretend you've done something. You haven't saved a thing when you do that.

So Chet Brown and Paul Fritz from the Park Service are the ones I remember, although there were some others. Fritz was the one who was more of a go-getter because Brown's health, I guess, wasn't too well. Brown has died since. But he did diligently stay on the job. He tended to be the one who talked to people, and Fritz was the one who was out charging around like a bull in the woods.

We got to be very well acquainted, and Fritz got very closely acquainted with the [Lowell and Jean] Hagood family in Orick, which was the town's leading family. Every other person around there in every gas station and every store and every motel and everything are Hagoods. The senior Hagoods have since moved on to Rio Dell. It got to be a regular party place at their great big house. Everybody would congregate there for redwoods meetings and dinner. Mrs. Hagood was always putting something on the big stove, and it was always a very festive situation. That's the situation we left that I mentioned to you where we [with my wife, Esther, and the Wayburn family] spent the night New Year's Eve [1966] out standing in the woods. We couldn't get back to the Hagoods' because it got dark on us.

Fritz was at the Hagoods' a lot, and Chet Brown was there once in a while. There were also other people who were involved locally like Dave Van de Mark, and people who went up there to do photography like Howard King, and the young fellows like Jim Rose. The Wayburns became part of the Hagood family, practically. They came and went with their daughters. It got to be one big family working out of Orick for Redwood National Park in Redwood Creek.

The other thing about it was that if we were going to have a national park that took in state lands, the ideal way would be to have it all contiguous so it would really be a big park and not to

Litton: go off trying to grab off little state parks here and there. Prairie Creek was a big state park, and all of its waters, except those that go directly in the ocean [in] little trickles, are part of the Redwood Creek watershed. They end up in Prairie Creek which meets Redwood Creek just above Orick.

Finding the Tallest Tree

Litton: On one occasion when we were looking at Redwood Creek, we wanted to look at the upper part of it. Georgia Pacific [Lumber Company] owned that road, owned the property, the land and the big mill there on the coast. Big Lagoon was owned by Georgia Pacific then. I guess it still is. They didn't really keep people from going in there because people would go in to fish, or they would go in to hunt or [for] any old reason because the logging trucks were using the road all the time, and they couldn't afford to put gates across it because those trucks were barreling along there in a big cloud of dust. I think there were some warning signs, some signs that said "tree farm." [laughs] They didn't really keep you out.

We were going down Bridge Creek, over this coastal ridge and into Redwood Creek, which parallels the coast. As I remember, by the time we got to the area, the logging companies were cutting alongside of Redwood Creek, and devastating the Bridge Creek area. Most of that had been cut earlier. It was coming back or at least it had healed over somewhat. I think there was a gate at the entrance to the property where there was a man. We said we wanted to go in and look around and, in fact, I think we identified ourselves-- these guys did--as part of the National Park Service team. The people at the gates didn't care. It didn't make any difference to them whether Howard Libbey liked it or not.

We just drove in. I remember we got halfway up the road, and there was a young fellow who had this gigantic logging truck. We still use pictures of it here and there with this great massive log on it and some other logs. He had pulled over to the side of the road because he was having trouble with his brakes. He didn't know what to do about it because some of the air hoses were leaking, and he was looking for some Scotch tape [laughs] or something for his brakes.

We said to him, half facetiously, "It's all down hill. Why don't you just let it go and end up in the meadow." The truck driver said, "I wonder if it would be safe." "Oh, yes, you'll be okay. Go ahead," we told him. [laughs] So he did pull out. I don't know whatever happened to him. If he lost his brakes on that hill, that would be the end of him. They'd never find him in the bushes off somewhere.

Litton: We went on down to Redwood Creek, and we crossed it. I do remember that Russ [Russell] Butcher was with us.

Well, we went over this road. We came down the other side. We got to Redwood Creek. We parked, and here was this wall of trees. It was continuous along Redwood Creek and it still is. We crossed the creek where we could. There wasn't any bridge there or anything. You just had to wade. The first place we hit was, of course, the place where this curve of the creek brought the trees closest to us. It was where the road first came to the creek. We went across there, and then we tried to wander back into the trees.

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Litton: When you get inside a redwood forest, the shade keeps things from growing on the floor. Well, that's the way it was there. It was rather hard to get around, so we never got very far in. There was a lot of fallen wood--branches and things--that were in the way, and Chet Brown was not a person to scramble through the woods with a great deal of vigor. He was sort of unimpassioned and rather calm about the whole thing.

He made some remark about how it was logged on the other side, and didn't we need Mill Creek. He also said something that was a little bit negative. In a friendly way I kind of blew up, and I said, "Chet, for crying out loud, look at these redwoods. Look at this forest that goes along this ridge and down the valley a little ways. It's on both sides. It's the only place with any substantial growth of redwoods left that we could even think of in national park terms. As far as you know, this could be the tallest tree in the world right here!" Just like that. [laughter]

Well, that was Chet's way. He figured I had identified the tallest tree in the world just by slapping it. He looked up and said, "It's pretty tall all right." All the rest of them were, too. You couldn't tell the difference.

Chet and the Park Service people went back and naturally the next time Chet went in, he measured the tree. The Geographic people or maybe the Park Service went in first. It was a tree that was easy to measure, and very few redwoods are. A lot of redwoods in the forest you couldn't measure because there is no way to see the top and the bottom. If you are seeing the top of the tree from outside somewhere, you're never sure when you get inside that the bottom is the same tree. There is no way to identify it. Trees pretty close to the edge of the forest have always been the world's tallest tree because they are the ones you can get a sight on. Of course, with triangulation, since the other side of Redwood Creek had been logged, they could go back in there, set up their instrument, take the angle and the distance, and they knew how high

Litton: the tree was. If the tree had been thirty trees back in the woods, and there were lots of them and still are, they couldn't have done that. At least it would have been very difficult. They would have had to climb a tree that was a candidate and put a marker of some kind on it so that they could have told for sure that the bottom of that tree was the tree they were thinking about.

They measured that, and maybe it's the tallest tree right there. Maybe it's the tallest one left in the world, and maybe it's not. We don't know.

Lage: Did the tallest tree idea get them more motivated for Redwood Creek then?

Litton: Oh, sure, you had to save the world's tallest tree! [laughs] So the Geographic comes in, and here's the world's tallest tree just found. All kinds of other things were found that were different. In fact, the lumber companies were coming up with new genes that they were going to breed into the redwood trees. People took it seriously, and I think the Geographic did. The new genes would make redwood trees that would grow, in the lifetime of a man, to be two hundred feet tall. Now it's been taking them hundreds of years to grow that tall. The lumber company said they would have genetically superior trees, which is just total baloney.

What they did do was for the Geographic's benefit. Replanting redwoods from seeds is a joke. The lumber companies don't want any redwoods the next time around. It would be a nuisance to wait for them. Redwoods don't ordinarily grow back from seeds. Redwood trees come up again, as they have all down the peninsula and behind Oakland, from the roots of the old tree around the stump. As you notice, they grow in circles called cathedrals, but the reason they grew that way was that a big redwood was cut down there, and the little trees came up all around the stump.

When they plant trees by helicopter, usually it's just done for the press. If it's done responsibly, it's Douglas fir most of the time. Maybe it's a Sitka spruce, but it's not redwoods. When the Geographic was there, they took some little redwood slips or seedlings (I don't know which) that they got from a nursery, and they went out on the Gold Bluffs Beach Road, and they stuck these in the ground there. It was so temporary it was ridiculous. It was as if they had planted them, but you could still see the little plastic cups they were in because the rain washed the dirt away. They hadn't even bothered to take the seedlings out of the containers. They planted them right in a stream course where they had logged, and it was all gravel, and the water came down and washed away the soil around them. The next thing you know, these little things were sitting up there with their roots on the bare ground, and the next thing you know they were gone.

Litton: During the time the Geographic was there, it made very impressive photography to show people, the planted trees that the lumber people were so serious about. The whole area they planted wasn't half the size of this table! [laughs] It was about fifteen little trees, just a total joke. They put up exhibits behind glass showing how they were planting. Oh, it all looked just great in the good old uncommitted Geographic, but anyone who cared to could read between the lines--or behind all the phony claims and "exhibits."

IV THE DIABLO CANYON CONTROVERSY

[Interview 2: February 2, 1981]##

The Basic Issue: The Last Piece of Natural Californian Coast

Lage: What made Diablo Canyon such a hot controversy within the Sierra Club? Some people, particularly from the East, apparently thought this was very much a local California issue, and regretted the time and energy the club put into it.*

Litton: Today it wouldn't be considered local by anyone because it involved a nuclear power plant which would be among the biggest yet built, certainly the biggest in the West. That alone would make it a major issue, but to me that wasn't the issue. The issue was not what kind of a power plant would be built there, or what would be built there. It was that anything would be considered--allowed--to take over the last piece of remaining natural-looking Californian coast.

Now, some would say, "What about the King Range in Humboldt County?" That's not what we would think of as [typical] Californian coast. That's the northwest coast of the Douglas fir. The Californian coast I equate with things beginning in Mendocino County, perhaps, and coming on south to Marin with the rolling hills and the oak trees, to Monterey County, to the Santa Barbara area, and right on down to the Mexican border. That's what California is when you think in terms of the early days of California history, the pastoral landscape. There is really none of that left that isn't

*The Sierra Club's official involvement with the Diablo Canyon power plant began on May 7, 1966, when the board of directors voted not to oppose a PG&E power plant at Diablo. The Diablo site had been chosen as an alternative to PG&E's original site at Nipomo Dunes, which the club recommended for state park status. There followed a bitter three-year controversy within the Sierra Club over the board decision, with two membership referendums upholding the board's original resolution.--ed.

Litton: impacted in some way by jarring intrusions of man. Even the areas you can't drive to in Santa Barbara County around Point Conception are not only being considered--considered! they have already been determined--to be future liquefied natural gas terminals. The Southern Pacific Railroad runs along those areas and has been there all along.

We really didn't have any unscarred natural coastland left except the area that is called the Point Bouchon Peninsula, which is not a peninsula but a substantial and spacious bulge of the California coast where all the highways--101 is the highway--go behind the San Luis range of mountains. The San Luis Range is a modest range in height, but substantial in area. They had left this area of the coast alone. The area was still encompassed by two large ranches, neither of which was being used intensively for ranching, although there were a few cattle that came in under contract. The owners were not ranchers per se.

The [Robert B.] Marre ranch was to the south of Point Buchon from Avila near Point San Luis north to Diablo Creek. Diablo Creek was the boundary line of the property owned by Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Field for many, many years. The Field property continued north and connected with Montona de Oro State Park.

Lage: Did the Diablo Canyon site sit on one or the other of these properties?

Litton: It sat primarily on the Marre property to the south of Diablo Creek. The Marres were the people PG&E dealt with or thought they could deal with. The older man, Luigi Marre, was not really in charge any more. His son [Robert] approaching middle age, was not really terribly concerned with the natural or aesthetic values of the area and was looking for ways to make money.

PG&E came along with all kinds of propositions which would end up making the Marres a good deal of money. The propositions required merely taking over one section of the property and not the whole thing. The one section was the most remote section of the property. In fact, it was right on the shore and was described, unfortunately, in some Sierra Club circles as being out of sight of the highway--invisible from the highway. Therefore, it didn't matter. Of course, I think anyone who cares about what is natural and native would think that would be what would make it matter most of all. Because the area was remote, it wasn't seen. Many jumped at the conclusion that it was a windswept, treeless slot when, in fact, among many other wonderful and lovely and beautiful things, it contained the largest standing coast live oak [*Quercus agrifolia*] of record. There had been a California live oak which was almost that big in Napa County, but that tree had fallen over and was dead. Of the coast live oaks in

Litton: California, its span of 130' 6" was measured accurately and turned out to be the largest such tree of record. One of the early acts of PG&E when they put a road up the canyon in order to install their transmission lines, which were put in long before the plant was built, was to cut that tree in two. In other words, they took off one entire side of it to enable their trucks to get by.

It wouldn't be necessarily a major issue just because it happened to destroy the largest coast live oak in the world. The whole thing was more than a symbol.

Preservation or Development for a Power Plant: Arguments Over the Use of the Canyon

Litton: Diablo Canyon was an area, and a large area, which the National Park Service had identified as being worthy of inclusion among the lands that we should preserve nationally--not locally, not regionally.

Lage: It was recommended as a national park?

Litton: It had been identified for inclusion in the system, but in what category they never said because the National Park Service never really studied it very well either. However, we would presume, if not a national park, a national seashore such as we have now in the Golden Gate headlands. Diablo Canyon was much more qualified for national park status because the entire San Luis Range behind it was essentially virginial. The whole thing could really be the representative area of the whole California coast which used to be so beautiful. Even within my lifetime, I can remember when there was a great deal of beauty in areas that are now terribly despoiled in Orange County and San Diego County and Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, and all the way north.

Here we had an opportunity to do something like that, and the state had already moved in that direction with Montana de Oro State Park. Montana de Oro was just beyond the northern part of this property around the bend from Diablo Canyon. It was almost within sight.

Lage: Did it include the same type of landscape?

Litton: Yes, but it was a very small area and mainly just a beach and a cove, not enough area to withstand the human impacts that you would expect to come into any national recreation area, national seashore, or national park or monument.

Lage: The argument I've heard from the other side is that the state was not interested in Diablo. They wouldn't have purchased it to increase the park there.

Litton: There were always limitations on what money could be spent, and as long as Diablo had no threats against it, perhaps there was no need for the state to be interested. Despite the fact that our state parks are well managed and maintained in a pretty good and natural manner, there would have to be some concern if the state did take it over, that maybe it would not remain as pristine as it was. However, if you are going to use that argument that the state wasn't interested, the state also wasn't interested in the redwoods as a national park. It wasn't interested in the area that finally became the redwood national park. The state was all too ready to give up Yosemite. Remember that? That used to be under state guardianship. It became a national park. That argument doesn't really hold water. The state doesn't have any of the coast along Highway 1 between Point Lobos and San Simeon.

Lage: What I've heard said is that the Diablo Canyon area would have been lost even if the Sierra Club had not endorsed the power plant there. It would have been lost anyway because the state wasn't interested in it for a park.

Litton: How would it have been lost?

Lage: Because the Marres were planning to develop it.

Litton: Yes. In fact, I went to the Marres' place and stayed there awhile, and discussed the whole issue. The Marres can still develop everything they were ever going to develop. The land is subject to development. This is the area that is facing south to Point San Luis near Avila. Now, that's what they were thinking of developing. The area where the plant is would be less desirable for development because it's more subject to fog because it is around on the northwest-facing side of the point. The Marres had no expressed interest in any development of that area.

It could have become any kind of a national property--national forest, BLM [Bureau of Land Management] or whatever. It would be much easier to accomplish that these days because we have such organizations as the Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land, which are very much involved in this very sort of thing--saving the land until such time as its value is recognized and until whatever governmental agency that might best be involved will have the funds to come in and buy it. That's what has been happening all over with the Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land.

Litton: The Marres still have the same options to develop right now. You can say it doesn't matter now; it's all shot anyway. It is, in a sense, but you realize that PG&E built its own private road around the south side of the Point Buchon region around the San Luis Range. They had to do that because Point Buchon is not a peninsula in the usual sense of the word. It doesn't stick way out there. It's just a bulge in the coast, and so the Marres might have developed it. If they did, the area of development, in my view, would have been confined to the south-facing area of that range, which is far and away the more desirable from the standpoint of residential use. The area of development would have been confined at least for the time being and perhaps for many years and perhaps for all time, even if they had full choice in the matter, and nobody else was interested. Because of the nature of the terrain, it would have been large parcels, no doubt. They were talking forty acres. But it was just pie-in-the sky. They weren't really doing anything.

It would have been expensive because they don't have any city nearby to provide the services--and little old San Luis Obispo County is not likely to--that are essential to that kind of development unless it's totally privately funded, and that just isn't done.

Even if it had been developed, there would have been some gentleness expressed toward nature with a residence here and a residence there the way it was done in some other areas like the Santa Ynez Valley. We don't like to see what's happening in Santa Ynez, but at the same time, the zoning restrictions (the covenants that people go into) do keep it from becoming what Diablo Canyon has become now. Diablo Canyon has a giant nuclear plant which the rate-payers of California have already invested two billion dollars in, giving it all to PG&E. PG&E says, "Oh, no, the stockholders have paid that." Well, where are they getting their money from?

The question of whether Diablo Canyon would have been lost anyway can involve a very long answer. The Field property was not subject to being developed at all. It is now impacted by the power plant terribly because of the power lines that go over it, even though the plant itself does not sit on the Field property, on the north side of the creek. The Field property side of the creek is where the roads go up and over the mountains. It is where all the swaths were cut out for the power line towers. That area is impacted, but still away from sight of Diablo Canyon itself. The Fields could put in anything they want. Now PG&E has the plant on the one side, to the south of the Field property, which involves all that coast and up the hills to the first crest at least, and I don't know how far back it goes. I believe the whole area is privately owned one way or another.

Litton: Then on the north side of the Field property, the road into the property goes through Montana de Oro State Park. The only access to the Field property now, aside from the paved road that PG&E put in from the south and the paved road to Montana de Oro on the north, would be the dirt roads which service the power line towers. As you know, they go zigzagging all over the hills.

If the Sierra Club had defended this place, we would have had an issue in which the weight of the Sierra Club would have been brought to bear. The natural values of the area, its potential recreation values, would have come to light for people to see. People would have seen, for example, that the Buchon Peninsula is the type locality for the Bishop pine, which is an endemic tree in California. It has a very narrow zone of distribution and is named for Saint Louis the Bishop--San Luis Obispo. The Bishop pine does occur around Inverness, Tomales Bay, and in scattered little places. But the ultimate representation of it is in the San Luis Range in the Diablo Canyon area. In fact, right up at the head of Diablo Canyon there is a forest of it.

To anyone involved in biology, I think it's important that one species has its prime location there. The area also has the largest oak tree. It has certainly the best preserved tidal zone in California because nobody could get there, except those who were specifically permitted to. Nobody could get there to look at or touch any of the things in the tide pools, including the masses of abalone which are like nothing else left on the coast. There are sea lions, sea otters. Of course, there are also the inland things you would expect to find, like deer, coyotes, and the usual things of California.

Lage: Were you this knowledgeable about Diablo before the controversy occurred?

Litton: No, I only knew it as a piece of the coast that had very little disturbance. Since I fly and am a pilot, I would frequently go down along the coast. I had the opportunity to admire what was left of the beauty. This was the one place that, in my view, should be cherished, and I cherished it, just to be able to look at it.

Lage: Had you walked it or was this from the air?

Litton: From the air, then. No, I hadn't walked it. I had no access to it, and I never set foot on it. Of course, from the air when you are only five hundred feet high, it's pretty close. I knew the nature of the land because I am a Californian, and I have walked over lots of what used to be the wild coast. In fact, when I was in college at UCLA, I mapped geologically for a term paper the San Joaquin hills in Orange County. It was the Irvine Ranch, and it is now being developed so horribly. I guess you could say that if development has to come in a massive way, they are trying to make it look nice.

Litton: There is even a branch of the University of California there. Here were the San Joaquin hills, another island of wilderness on the coast. I walked every square inch, figuratively speaking, of those hills mapping the geology.

Of course, the San Joaquin hills are nothing scenically like Diablo Canyon. There are very few trees in the hills and it is lower country. I do have familiarity with California's coast.

PG&E and the Public Utilities Commission Hearings

Litton: I went over and over again to the Public Utilities Commission hearings on Diablo Canyon held in San Luis Obispo. Of course, I had a chance to testify, and so did others, including the Fields--Oliver Field, which made all of his money in oil. His wife Ruby, at one point, said that when I was talking she wanted to stand up on her chair and cheer, if it would do any good! [laughter] I might as well tell you that even though it sounds rather boastful.

PG&E went to a great deal of trouble to try to conceal what they were really doing and to try to refute our arguments. Pete McCloskey, who is now my congressman (I guess he was then, too), went down there several times and sat in these hearings. In his office now in Washington, D.C., although his district doesn't come anywhere close to Diablo Canyon, all of the pictures you see as you enter his office are big color prints of Diablo Canyon.

Lage: Are they your color prints?

Litton: Yes. I don't know how he got them! [laughter] I didn't give them to him, but he got them from the club or something. Anyway, Professor Georg Treichel, who is a professor of geography at San Francisco State [University], went down there to testify as to the value of Diablo Canyon. Of course, there was Bob Hoover from Cal [California Polytechnical University at San Luis Obispo]. These people were very emphatic. Also at the hearings was Carl Sharsmith of San Jose [State University]. He's a naturalist who is up in the John Muir category, plus being scientific at the same time. These people expressed themselves, and all of those expressions are in documents that I believe you have.

Georg Treichel was sitting there, and I could see what PG&E was up to. They brought out a great big color photograph, mounted, taken from the air. This fellow paced back and forth, one of PG&E's suave lawyers. We had attorneys, too. The Fields and others had retained attorneys, and yet the Fields could profit by this thing. They just

Litton: didn't want it to happen to the land. The reason they owned that land and held it was that they didn't want it changed. Old Luigi Marre said the same thing about his stewardship of the region, and his family's. But Marre's son had been off to college, and he was of a different mind.

Anyway, they held up to Georg Treichel this big picture. Treichel had just confirmed that the Diablo Canyon area was the last piece of coast that didn't have either a highway or a railroad on it in California. That is, it was the last piece of coast like that south of Humboldt County. In Humboldt County you could climb little jagged stretches here and there where you don't see highways or railroads, although there is a lot of it just inland, along with the logging.

This fellow stood up, and he said, "Dr. Treichel, what do you see in this picture?" Georg, of course, not having flown the coast very much, although he is very savvy, said, "I see a piece of coast that appears to be a California coast." I recognized the spot immediately, and it was just north of Cambria, between Cambria and San Simeon. The PG&E lawyer said, "Can you see any railroad in that picture?" Georg said, "No." "Can you see any highway in that picture?" He said, "No." PG&E had taken a helicopter, and they had gotten just above the ocean. They had photographed the shore and the hills behind it. There were low cliffs or bluffs there, maybe forty or fifty feet high. They photographed it in such a way that a little ridge of hills (which you probably remember if you've driven north from Cambria), maybe thirty or forty feet high, concealed Highway 101. It was right there, but you couldn't see it in the picture.

Lage: It's also on a map. It doesn't seem like very good testimony.

Litton: Yes, but they knew they could pull this stunt, except they forgot a couple of things. For that moment, we had a tough attorney there, and I can't remember his name. Anyway, their lawyer was going on like this, and he asked all these questions. Georg stepped deeper and deeper into the trap. That wasn't going to be hard to take care of, except that when I came up, and I was brought up more than once, I said to the attorney beforehand. "Make them bring out that picture." Our lawyer said, "We want to see Exhibit So-and-So." This may have been the next day, or at least it was several hours later. The hearing officer represented the Public Utilities Commission. As you know, we had only one strong friend in the utilities commission, Bill Bennett, who is now the chairman of the State Board of Equalization. He was rabid on the subject, and you have some printed quotes from him in some of the documents.

Litton: Anyway, the Public Utilities Commission had a hearing officer who was not a member of the commission. The PUC gets a judge, or someone equivalent, to conduct these things the way the Federal Power Commission and all the others do. They get someone who is used to presiding and maintaining order.

Our attorney said, "We want that picture brought out." PG&E demurred. They didn't want to bring it out when I was up there. Finally the hearing officer told them they had to, and they pretended they had lost it, that it had been sent back to Santa Rosa or some place. Well, they finally brought it out, and we just slapped them right down because I told them exactly where the photograph was taken and what was right behind that little lump of ground. We had been trapped, in a way, by saying the only place on the coast where you wouldn't see a railroad or a highway or both was the Diablo Canyon region. PG&E had pulled this little stunt of finding a place where a fold in the ground from a certain angle had concealed a highway. The photograph had been enlarged and you could see the hills behind it.

Utility Companies and the Environment: An Assessment##

Lage: As you talk, I see that you have strong opinions about PG&E and the way that they conduct themselves. Do you want to elaborate on that a little bit?

Litton: PG&E had a vice-president in charge of public relations, and maybe they still do, named Robert Gros. His name is G-r-o-s. Instead of "Gros," though, they wanted him called "Grow," or at least that's what he called himself. He lives in Portola Valley, or he did. I don't know if he still does. He lived next door to Bill Lane [of Sunset]. Their property came back to back, and they used to talk over the back fence quite a bit, and Bill would come and tell me at Sunset what Bob Gros had told him. "We've got to be reasonable about these things because PG&E, after all, is all we've got." Well, I think that's the trouble with California, that PG&E is all we've got. While PG&E perhaps feels constrained to respond to public opinion, the public has really no control over it. PG&E is out of control. It does what it pleases. Whenever it wants a rate increase, sometimes there will be a little token objection, but they end up getting it.

On the other hand, despite the fact that from the standpoint of the environment they are far from good, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power belongs to the people, and they don't have any stockholders except their customers, and therefore their rates are lower and the service is better. They are so efficient that they come up and destroy Mono Lake and everything else.

Lage: They are no more environmentally concerned?

Litton: No, but if the people that they serve want them to do things--and let's remember that ninety percent of the people they serve are newcomers and don't know anything because that's the way southern California grows--they have to respond to it. The Los Angeles Department can't say "no," the way PG&E does. They don't have to answer to stockholders, except they have to answer to the people they serve.

Incidentally, some of the things that we deplore about Los Angeles have worked just the other way. They have worked to the benefit of the environment, not because DWP [Department of Water and Power] intended it that way but, of course, they will take credit for it whenever they can. Owens Valley is an example. People say how the Owens Valley was destroyed when the Owens River was taken. What if that Owens River were still there, and the Owens Valley could be settled on all that land that now belongs to the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power? Can you imagine what kind of a place it would be? It would be terrible. It would be all condominiums and ski resorts all over the place and hunting clubs and shopping centers and tacky-tacky everything. If that water were still there, it would have permitted this kind of development that would have destroyed the place. Although it is purely incidental, the facts of taking the Owens River away and of the city owning the whole place (which it does), those facts have kept it a wilderness. They have enabled us, for example, to rescue and save as a living species on this earth, the tule elk. The elk has really been wiped out of its native habitat in the San Joaquin Valley. The tule elk, the three or four hundred in existence, were taken to the Owens Valley, and they now live and thrive on the property of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

Lage: You are not advocating the same thing for Mono Lake?

Litton: No, not at all, I wouldn't advocate it for the Owens Valley either, but we're talking about--as I said about Carter and Reagan--the evil of two lessers! [laughter] No, Owens Lake was a lake which dried up. It was drying up anyway, and Mono Lake is a different situation, being the oldest lake in the western hemisphere and maybe in the world.

Owens Lake was navigated in the old days. It wouldn't be now, but it was navigated by the vessels carrying silver from Cerro Gordo across to the railroad that went to Mojave. Owens Lake was dried up by the Los Angeles aqueduct. Every once in a while in a heavy snow or rainfall year, it fills up again, or at least partially. So, no, I don't advocate it for Mono Lake because there is still an Owens River, and it still goes to Owens Lake. It just doesn't go in

Litton: big floods that keep Owens Lake full. The environment around the Owens River in the Owens Valley hasn't been changed. If they start pumping water out of the ground, it will be changed.

Mono Lake is an entirely different thing. It is a natural wonder that depends entirely on those streams, those poor, pitiful little streams that run in. Those streams are now diverted to DWP's Mono Crater's tunnel.

To get back to PG&E, we had enough contact with PG&E's officers to see that in the view of someone like me--they were ruthless toward California, toward--shall I use the dirty word?--the environment, the environment that they, as well as the rest of us, have to live in. They were not ruthless in their own view, because I imagine they take their children to Sunday school or somebody does--maybe I shouldn't say that. Then I think of some of them, and they couldn't! They are not the only ones. Southern California Edison has done terrible damage in the Sierra Nevada with the Vermilion Valley Reservoir, Huntington Lake, and Shaver Lake and all those artificial things that are up there, and they'll do more if they can, along with PG&E.

PG&E has done a lot of bad things for the environment. On the other hand, of course, they put out their little propaganda sheet every month which costs something.

Lage: Yes, which we all get to read.

Litton: Which we all get to read and pay for, but we never see the other side in there. Unfortunately, even though we are paying for that thing, we don't have a chance to put any input in. My, it makes them certainly look antiseptic, doesn't it?

Lage: Do you think they have made any move toward better understanding of conservation?

Litton: Only as they are forced to by the weight of public opinion, and they are still devious about it. They will still, behind the scenes, pull any dirty trick they can. Obviously, it's to their advantage. It's amazing to see them coming out with messages about conserving energy now. One of the reasons, of course, is so obvious that I don't even have to mention it. If people feel that PG&E is helping them to use less gas and less electricity, people will be much more amenable to seeing PG&E rates go up, and PG&E won't have to work so hard to provide power, and they'll be saving all kinds of money. They'll put out less, and they'll get in more. We're supposed to blame ourselves if it costs us a lot because we use too much gas, if we've kept our furnace on overnight. We need to conserve, but I don't know why we should conserve for the benefit of PG&E.

Litton: I don't even know where their offices are now, so I am talking out of school. Their company, through one device or another, has dominated the Public Utilities Commission for years. I remember that they had directors who were on the Public Utilities Commission at the time that this Diablo Canyon thing was going on. These were the people who were sitting in judgment and supposedly making unbiased decisions.

Lage: Do you mean they were active directors of PG&E at the time?

Litton: Oh, yes, and I'm trying to remember the name of one of them. It ended in o-f or o-v. His wife was well well known socially, and her first name was Libby. They lived in Marin County. [Elizabeth and Albert Gatov]

PG&E people serve on public commissions--not only PG&E people, but others--people who were active in the company, officers, ex-officers, retired, emeritus, chairman of the board. This is the same way that union officers get involved in labor disputes. Maybe that's not a good analogy. If you look into all this, you will find that at that time, people with PG&E connections which were current and, in some cases, I believe, PG&E full-time employees, were on the PUC. I know that there were full-time employees that the Sierra Club worked with on the commission.

No Trade-Offs: The Need for "Extremist" Positions to Protect Nature

Lage: What do you think of the way PG&E conducted the Diablo Canyon battle?

Litton: The way they conducted the battle was dirty.

Lage: I am thinking in part of the letter you wrote to PG&E [June 13, 1966] at the beginning of the battle saying that their commitment from the Sierra Club was fraudulently obtained.

Litton: Well, of course, they didn't have to obtain it because the Sierra Club handed it to them on a silver platter. A certain element of the Sierra Club which purported to speak for the Sierra Club did that. The sad beginning of it all was the Sierra Club policy--let's not call it policy. People in the Sierra Club, among the leadership, are not necessarily hard-boiled politicians. They want to be loved. We think everyone should join with the Sierra Club and believe in what we believe in. Therefore, we mustn't believe in it too strongly, or we might offend them and keep them out, and then we won't have them as allies.

Litton: It took the Sierra Club a long time--in fact, most of the Sierra Club still doesn't recognize that you cannot make alliances with those who exist merely to destroy the values that you are trying to sustain. The Sierra Club is full of gentle souls, and we all have that side to us, and we want to persuade the people, even those who are earning their living fighting against the principles that we believe in. We want to persuade them that they must come around to our way of thinking or that they should partially come around to our thinking, or that we can trade them something else if they'll give up this and that. We tried that in Dinosaur [National Monument] battle. We saved Dinosaur, but we gave up Glen Canyon [Arizona]. It was giving up the bigger value in return for the lesser. The Sierra Club then put itself on record as supporting ideas which are now coming home to roost and really hurting the club because the ideas can be brought up.

For example, the arguments used to save Dinosaur National Monument--you can have the Central Arizona Project without Echo Park Dam--that was one of the club's arguments. The Central Arizona Project in itself was the worst thing that could possibly happen. Aside from the fact that those who are profiting by it are the Mafia, it's still the worst thing that can happen, and it's going right ahead. By 1986 the project will take the water out of the Colorado River that is now being used by southern California, and that's the reason we are going to have the Peripheral Canal, north coast rivers turned around, and everything else because all of California didn't look at the problem of the Colorado River. Southern California was allowed to grow and depend on that water, and now if it can't depend on that, it's going to get the water somewhere else, even if it comes from Alaska, the Columbia River, or whatever. That's a tragedy. In fact, that those people [the large population in southern California] are there in the first place is a tragedy.

Now, the Sierra Club also said, "We don't need the power from Echo Park Dam because we are entering the nuclear age. We are going to have atomic power. We've got all this wonderful uranium. You look back through the records, and you'll find some of the people you most respect and admire saying that very thing. Also, they said there is lots of coal. Now, here we are fighting the Warner Valley Energy System, which is going to destroy Zion and Bryce Canyons [in Utah], Cedar Breaks [National Monument], Grand Canyon, and everything else. It looks like it's going ahead now, because [Cecil] Andrus didn't have the guts to put his foot down on it. A coal operation is going to strip-mine the view from Bryce Canyon, to say nothing of the smog and the transmission of all that stuff and the power itself. Most of the power will go to southern California and make it possible for what little beauty is left to be destroyed just by the fact they have the power.

Litton: It's not getting the power that does all the damage. It's what it does when it goes to where they want it. That's what we forget. People say, "We need this to grow." The growth itself is the worst thing. Or, "We need it for where we are now." You don't need it for where you are now. You can go back to using a spear and picking berries.

Lage: How early did you develop this attitude? It seems to me that when you are critical of the Sierra Club for their attitude in the fifties about nuclear power and growth, they were very much a part of their times.

Litton: Well, I was worried then.

Lage: Then you were ahead of your time on this.

Litton: Oh, I don't know. I mean, what is my time? There must have been others. I had some terrible knockdown, drag-out arguments with Dave Brower. That's why I didn't get in the Sierra Club, and why I sort of ran my own course while in the Sierra Club. I didn't feel cooperation even within the club was necessary. I thought dissent and ferment or whatever you want to call it might be essential, and it wasn't just showmanship and trying to stand out and be apart from the crowd. I felt very uncomfortable about it, being naturally a shy person.

Lage: [laughs] I hadn't picked that up yet!

Litton: Anyway, the point I'm making is that if someone on the board that I liked and admired and wanted to work with didn't agree with me, then he didn't agree with me. Like John [B.] Oakes [former Sierra Club director] on the SST. He didn't want the SST [supersonic transport], but he said the Sierra Club would look foolish if it goes against the SST because we know we're going to have it. That was about in 1960. [laughs] I mean, we're going to have it next month! The board was already working on the SST in '60, '64, '65—I don't know when it was exactly. I said, "Let's not argue about whether the SST is going over the wilderness, or whether it was going over the cities. Most people said it mustn't go over the cities. Let's not argue about where it's going to go because once it's here, it's going to go where it damn pleases. Let's just say, "No SST in the United States."

Lage: This was early, way before the seventies then.

Litton: Yes.

Lage: I always think of SST arguments as coming in the early seventies.

Litton: Maybe it was. [Sierra Club Board of Directors discussion of SST began September 1970. Resolution against development and use of SST passed May 1974.] John Oakes, a good man, owner of the New York Times, said, "I couldn't support you on that"--he was on the board then--"because we would look foolish." I said, "It's what you mean, though. You don't really want an SST at all. Why don't we say what we mean, and then if that looks foolish, that's just too bad. At least that's the way we feel." A resolution against the SST passed finally, and Oakes voted with me, but he said he couldn't vote with me at first because the SST was coming.

As it happened, for once we were the side that was going to win because the American SST never came. It was assumed that Seattle, the state of Washington, the U.S. aircraft industry, and maybe the entire nation's economy was going to go down the tubes if we didn't build this SST and have them running all over the place. We still don't have them, and the fact that the Concorde is losing money hand over fist and just barely has a toehold in Dulles [International Airport] and [John F.] Kennedy [International Airport] isn't really giving us an SST country. Certainly, Boeing isn't making the SST.

V DAVE BROWER: REFLECTIONS ON HIS CAREER

Differences Between Litton, Brower, and Others on Conservation Policy

- Litton: I split with Dave Brower over his advocating, because of influences he had come under, that the Sierra Club abandon its boycott of Japan.
- Lage: You are not speaking of the Sierra Club now? Do you mean Friends of the Earth?
- Litton: No, the Sierra Club. This was way back. Dave still appears at Sierra Club board meetings and is invited to say things. Friends of the Earth [took this position] too, but since he left the Sierra Club he has come out against the Japanese boycott. I don't think he really feels the same way now because Dave has changed a lot. Another example of how he has changed is oil shale--oil shale at Rifle, Colorado. He used to say it was going to be the salvation of us from the standpoint of needing power. In those days, the Sierra Club never said anything about "let's not."
- Lage: What period time was the oil shale argument?
- Litton: That was in the fifties. We are talking about Dinosaur again. I didn't get finished with that.
- Lage: Tell me about some of the early arguments with Brower.
- Litton: The first argument that I had with Dave was when he called me to come to the Sierra Club because he had seen my articles in the Los Angeles Times. I said, "I don't think the Sierra Club has a strong feeling about any of these things. I see the Sierra Club as interested in having its own pleasure and having fun and maybe wanting to save Yosemite so it can run around there a little more. It wants to save the Sierra or the John Muir Trail. I don't see the Sierra Club as really having a conscience about what's left of the world when all of

Litton: us fellow hikers on the trail and campers in the meadow are gone. Its approach is shallow. This was my feeling. People go and plan their next outing. That's how they spend their meetings.

Dave said something to this effect, and I can't quote him: "Things are going to be different now. I'm taking over." Now, this is what his enemies in the club would love to be able to quote him as having said in 1952. That's not a quote, but he gave a very strong impression that he intended to be as influential as he could. He was coming into a position that had been created for him, and he intended to move the Sierra Club toward the things that he believed in or, at least, that I believed in. I presume he believed in them, too.

He became a strong voice for conservation. Some said it went to his head, but you have to be willing to take a stand and become a figurehead if you are going to be influential. Many of the things that Dave did certainly didn't please some of the hierarchy very much. However, he was so effective and so obviously effective to people all across the country, that the hierarchy before it began to worry too much about Dave's strength, joined in.

Now, you take the big ads in the New York Times about the redwoods and saving Grand Canyon. These were the ads that talked about not flooding the Sistine Chapel so tourists could get closer to the ceiling and all that sort of thing--you remember those. Those things were signed by whomever was nominally in charge. Ed Wayburn, as president of the club would sign these letters and all that, things that Dave Brower did.

I would argue that we should not say it's all right to dam up Glen Canyon to save Echo Park. We should be against the whole thing.

Lage: Now, did you argue that at the time?

Litton: Oh, yes.

Lage: Was this a discussion you had with Brower at the time?

Litton: Well, with Brower and everybody else, yes, absolutely. I said, "Don't give an inch." The trouble with the Sierra Club is that, like so many others, it has dealt with alternatives. In other words, don't take the Nipomo Dunes. We'll find you another place. So we find you another place [Diablo Canyon] that we know nothing about and say, "Take that." They took that, and they kept the dunes! They had both then. Let's say they don't have the option in the dunes today, but there are lots of things going on there that are just about as bad. There is no control over the dune buggies which have destroyed most of the life in the dunes. There is no control except for the

Litton: state park area [Pismo State Beach] which is the pristine area that already existed and was protected. The other faction in the Sierra Club during the fight for Diablo Canyon [those willing to sacrifice Diablo in order to save Nipomo Dunes] used pictures of Pismo State Beach to show how beautiful the dunes were. If they had shown pictures of the area in question, you would have seen the dune buggy tracks all over and crowds of people in total disregard for the environment there.

Lage: At that time?

Litton: At that time even, yes. There wasn't as much then as there is now. The club's members didn't even bother to go into that area and see what was going on there.

Lage: You didn't feel the Nipomo Dunes area was as valuable as Diablo?

Litton: It's all valuable.

Lage: Even if it was a question of trade-offs?

Litton: That area could be destroyed. If you had to destroy something--and that's something I never conceded--what would happen [at the dunes] would be so much more visible to all people that it would be responded to in some way that would stop it. It would have been an affirmative response, a strong response. A response would at least have been possible because people would know what was going on. All during this period of construction and fighting at Diablo Canyon, nobody knew what was there. Of course, people were effectively kept out by the Marres and then by PG&E so they wouldn't know. The only salvation is a little airplane they can't shoot down. You can get up there and look. You could go on the ground, too, at one time, and, as you remember, Hugh Nash, the editor of the Sierra Club Bulletin [in the sixties], was arrested by the Pinkerton guards and held captive for a while because he dared to set foot on the land which we were all setting foot on, but most did it a little more secretly.

The thing about the [Nipomo] dunes is that if it happened there, people would have to look at it, and it would serve us right. In other words, man should have to face what he does. He shouldn't be able to run away from it. The whole idea and the philosophy in the Sierra Club about Diablo Canyon was that you could run away from it. You didn't have to look at it. It was behind the hills. It was over there by the ocean, and that's a place you couldn't go anyway because it was wild. Well, of all the crazy things! We should care about what's there whether we enjoy them and use them and mess them up or not. We should care more. We should be willing to put a fence, figuratively or otherwise, around large areas of the world and let the natural processes proceed.

Litton: That's what we haven't been able to do, an ideal we haven't lived with. We haven't wanted to live with it, or we are afraid to put it forth because we think it looks extreme. We are afraid that the world will say, "If you can't use it, what good is it?" I think many people, at least enlightened people in the world, are ready for that kind of a message. That we can't use it all.

Lage: The wilderness, not for man's use.

Litton: No, we're not talking about all wilderness. We're talking about some places. In other words, the use is already being limited because use has a physical impact, a visible physical impact, and there is a lot more that's invisible than visible when you go into the Sierra and put lots of people there as the Sierra Club has done for 100 these many decades. It has done it for generations now, and the club has been part of the problem without realizing it. Now the club realizes it, and now others realize it. The National Park Service, the Forest Service realize it. You have to have a permit now, so they won't have too much density in the wilderness. There are some places that we shouldn't go prospecting in the Mojave Desert and so forth. The best is already found. We shouldn't be digging up what's left in the world looking for those last little dregs.

That's the trouble with being in so many areas. It's the trouble, for example, in a country which is still living in a Daniel Boone era--Canada. It doesn't realize yet that resources are finite. When you go into Tweedsmuir Provincial park in British Columbia, it was a tremendous area originally. It was set aside because it looked as if there was nothing there that we really need. We've got it everywhere else, so let's let that be a park, and there was a great inspiration behind it, Lord Tweedsmuir, himself. People who saw that country said, "Let's put that aside." Most of the people, who didn't have any access to it anyway, figured, "Why not?" It didn't make any difference.

All of a sudden, what do you have in Tweedsmuir Park? There are a lot of trees there. So they redraw the park boundary so that the trees are left out. It's so easy to do in British Columbia, which has a gangster government and that kind of an outlook anyway. Everything is for the lunch bucket. That's all it's there for. So they draw the line around Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, change it, and then along comes Alcoa, which becomes Alcan of Canada. Here's a chance to put a tremendous aluminum smelter down at Kitimat on the Pacific coast side, if you have a lot of hydro power to operate it. The way to get hydro power is out of all this lovely high country behind Mount Waddington and all the coast mountains there. There are all those beautiful lakes there and instead of having the lakes feeding over into the Fraser River and coming down hundreds of miles and finally coming out at Vancouver and sustaining salmon, why don't

Litton: we just dump that water into the other side by tunneling through the mountains. When they did that, why, of course, they destroyed the finest lakes in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park: Ootsa Lake, Eutsuk Lake, and Whitesale Lake. In the process, they just merely redrew the boundary lines again.

They keep redrawing the boundary lines, so the park is shrinking. While they cut back a little bit here, they add some acreage there. They add acreage in a place that, for one thing, they know people wouldn't give up, like Hunlen Falls, a big waterfall, that's already celebrated and appreciated. But they also add the acreage in places where they are sure there are no minerals, where they are sure that there is nothing that they can use.

We have had that attitude. We have kind of outgrown it. Reagan can come in and bluster around all he wants about giving the federal lands back to the states. They have never belonged to the states, so how can you say give it back to the states? He's not going to give it back. Yellowstone [National Park] may end up with PG&E, who knows? Why can't they bring steam from there? Maybe I better be careful here, but I don't think that Reagan is going to give Mount Rainier back to the state of Washington, which never had it, or Yosemite [National Park] to California, or Sequoia [National Park]. I really don't think that would work. There are lands that are capable of being used under the present set-up of law, BLM lands and Forest Service lands. The Reagan administration is going to work very hard to have this land used. That would be utter tragedy. We just can't let it happen. That's another subject, though.

Litton's Impressions of the Relationship between Brower and the Board in the Fifties##

Lage: I'm interested in what you said about your various arguments with Dave Brower. His thinking seemed to have evolved over time to more radical positions. You seem to have been connected or involved with a lot of these decisions.

Litton: I don't know what he thought all along. What came out--what was perceptible to the hierarchy or the longtime board of directors (which in those days could go on forever and in many cases had)--did change. They perceived Dave differently.

Lage: Did you perceive him differently since you first came in touch with him around '52 when he became executive director? How did you perceive him?

Litton: I didn't know at that time really what his background was. I knew I had seen his name. He had been climbing. I was aware of his existence as a Sierra Club member, and he had been a member of the board of directors. I never paid much attention to the Sierra Club. I wasn't in it, and the kinds of outings I saw, where people were all led along the trail in single file, were silly. They didn't do anything for you. There is a lot of that still, but not only in the Sierra Club, in a lot of places. This is partly because our wilderness environment has become so much more constricted that we have to follow rules now.

Dave came in mainly because the Sierra Club, although it hadn't grown rapidly, had gotten to be a burden on the volunteers. The same old volunteers who worked for the club, did the work because they were part of it, because it was a club, and they were the officers or the chairman of this committee or that, or a member of a committee or just a volunteer on something. In the various areas, which were primarily San Francisco and Los Angeles, the offices were run by volunteers. I don't know if they even hired a stenographer in those days. Everybody did something because he owed it to the Sierra Club, because the Sierra Club was his life.

You have these officers who had been around before World War II and afterward. Some of them, their careers had continued on and on with the Sierra Club. At one time, when they were younger, they had perhaps more energy, perhaps more time, and more enthusiasm or whatever it took to devote substantial chunks of their day-to-day lives to Sierra Club operations. They got tired of that. They just ran out of time. In some cases, they became more important people in their professions, and there were more demands on them. They just couldn't give it all to the Sierra Club anymore. Even though there were young people coming along, they didn't really want to lose their grip on the club. They didn't want to have a continuous changing over of day-to-day operations. In my view, they looked for someone they could depend on who was Sierra Club connected, and who would be amenable to the general thrust of what the board of directors and the whole old-time coalition of Sierra Club people wanted to do or wanted not to do. This was true of people in southern California and in the Bay Area mainly, which were the Sierra Club strongholds, who weren't necessarily on the board of directors.

Anyway, it looked as if an executive director was the way to go because other conservation organizations had executive directors, and these were people who were paid and were full-time and who managed the office and took care of it.

That's what they saw for Dave Brower. They saw him as a creative person who would advance the causes of the Sierra Club and could be depended on to follow the old party line, which really had no dissent.

Litton: We're all a bunch of nice people who get along well together, and we like the outdoors and, therefore, we want to have national parks and places to go and enjoy. Remember, it was to enjoy, to explore. This was maybe not the first purpose, but at that time the Sierra Club's purpose was to explore, enjoy, and render accessible--that goes back to John Muir. Muir wanted everybody to go to the mountains, and he wanted lots of roads and things to get them in there so they could enjoy. He didn't want sheep because he had been a sheep man. He didn't want logging because he had been a logger. He wanted everyone to come and enjoy the wilderness. He wanted to share it with them. He preached the gospel to come and love the mountains. He didn't realize you could love them to death.

It was explore, enjoy, and render accessible. That was the Sierra Club's credo. Well, soon we had to change that. It has changed several times since because the club's focus has moved beyond the Sierra Nevada and the mountains. It's gotten to be everything. It's gotten to be not only California, but the world.

Dave came in, and he was a person of vitality. Here was his chance to stand out. I don't think he consciously thought of himself as ambitious, but he wanted the Sierra Club, as long as he was running it--and more and more he thought he was running it and more and more he was running it--to accomplish things. He wanted it to be celebrated and to attract lots of members, and to be well off and to be able to hire not only him but other staff and operate like a big organization.

Lage: Do you think that growth was his goal, more than turning the Sierra Club into an instrument that could do something for wilderness?

Litton: I think that he felt that a big organization could do something for wilderness. I think that he felt that the club could perform better if it got bigger; that is, if it attained nationwide strength. I don't think he thought of all of this at once. As things developed, Dave's attitudes developed. I don't mean he reversed them, but they became modified in one way or another.

Litton's Influence on Brower and the Board: Grand Canyon and Mineral King

Litton: I was considered a wild-eyed freak and a nut because I said, "No, Glen Canyon is just as valuable."

Lage: You weren't on the board then [1954]. Did you come before the board and argue that, or before a committee meetings?

Litton: Beforehand, yes. But we all have jobs. We can't all spend all our time on these things. We have certain things that we are involved in, and I was, and I couldn't spend all my time in it. Let's go to something that I remember. They had a Sierra Club board meeting at one time at Jack London Square [May, 1963]. I think I was a member by then. I know I wasn't on the board because I wasn't sitting up front. Dave arranged for me to come and make a presentation. Showed a map of the Grand Canyon which I had made. It was an accurate map. The Sierra Club had endorsed and advocated the dams in the Grand Canyon. The knowledge of the board members was so fuzzy and so thin, they didn't even know where the Grand Canyon was. They knew there was a national park, and we mustn't have a dam there. But a dam down below that would back the water into the national park didn't seem to bother them. They weren't bothered either by a dam in the upper part where it would affect the flow of the water through the national park. In both cases, the dams would affect the canyon, even though the park didn't take in all of the area where the dams would be built. Well, now it does, and it does partly because we fought the dams there. I had to get up and say, "You can't do this." A [former] Sierra Club president had issued statements saying because of all the wonderful trout fishing that will be created by this dam in the Grand Canyon, we must insist that there be elevators to allow the public to go to the bottom of it. Well, for crying out loud! [laughs]

Lage: Now which president was that?

Litton: Bestor Robinson [president 1946-1948], and that's in those records that I gave you. That quotation is there or words to that effect.

Lage: Didn't the board at this very meeting reject that point of view?

Litton: They turned around right there.

Lage: As a result of your talk?

Litton: I guess it was. I was the only one who spoke. The board changed its policy right then and there.

Lage: Did Brower himself change his views?

Litton: Brower wasn't on the board then, and he couldn't vote. He had changed his views before that because we had had some conversations. I wasn't terribly close to him, except that I think in his view I was one of the few people who would open up and let him know exactly what I felt because I didn't really have any ax to grind in the club. I didn't want to go anywhere in the club. In those days, Dave had lots of ways of maneuvering and manipulating things in the club when he took on this job. I don't know how he did it, but he put me on the ballot--I didn't even know about it--to become a director [1964]. [laughs]

Litton: Anybody who was on that ballot was pretty likely to be elected. I think there were only two or three more people on the ballot than were going to be elected each time. In fact, it may have been a stacked ballot with, say, five people to be elected, five people on the ballot. I don't know. You could write in anybody else, who wouldn't have a chance. I don't remember how that happened, but Dave was certainly instrumental in getting me, Eliot Porter, John Oakes, Larry Moss, and several other people on the board of directors. It was not just because they would support him. It was because Dave felt they were the people who were moving in the directions that the club should move in.

Lage: We're not getting off the subject, but moving to a different issue. I think Dave himself said that you influenced him on Mineral King. Do you recall that?

Litton: Oh, I remember the incident. The Sierra Club has a lot of skiers in it. Formerly, the Sierra Club was more involved with enjoyment of the resources than saving them. On the map, Mineral King looked like an awfully good place to ski because it was, on the map, close to southern California. The fact that the road winds around so you cover twenty-five miles in three hours didn't seem to occur to people. There was going to be an easy way. You'd have an overflight or a gondola or a cable car. Nobody knew, but it looked good. Any place that could be developed for skiing, the Sierra Club used to kind of think that was nice. In fact, more recently they have gotten into some silly situations, tragic situations, because we went along that way.

Mineral King was one of them, in a way. The Sierra Club thought it would be nice to have skiing available at Mineral King. Of course, skiing was always available at Mineral King. If you want to ski in there and ski around, you can ski out again. But skiing doesn't mean skiing. Skiing means sitting in a chair and riding up to the top of a mountain and sliding down. That's most people's view. Of course, most of the promotion for it is made by the merchants who are going to clean up when it goes in. When you have the Far West Ski Association, you have the Far West Ski Merchant Association. That is what it really is. It's not primarily skiers who are looking for a place to ski because in many cases they recognize that there are limitations and drawbacks. Mineral King has some terrible drawbacks, but it looked good. Someone went in there in the winter and skied around and said, oh, it was nice, and came out. The Sierra Club was amenable, at least, and really affirmative about Mineral King because it didn't care. It didn't know that much. Nobody was excited. Nobody was worried; "Oh, yes, another place to ski, okay." They didn't look to see where it was.

Litton: They directed the Kern-Kaweah Chapter out of Bakersfield to take a position. John Harper was either chapter chairman, or he was more or less running the thing. He was certainly prominent then. The chapter had already taken a position against the skiing development at Mineral King. The board of directors directed the chapter to cooperate with the Forest Service and develop a plan. Of course, in those days everybody felt there might be a rope tow and a bunny hill, and you could slide down on an inner tube, and that would be it.

The chapter started to work with the Forest Service toward a plan. They went on and plans came and plans grew and the Forest Service got bigger and bigger ideas. They began to think of putting out for bids. Disney finally got the contract but there were others that applied for it.

Somewhere during that process, Mineral King came up before the board [May, 1965], or maybe I brought it up, I don't know, because I had been corresponding with Harper, and I had thoroughly offended and insulted him and blamed him. He hated me, I think, as I remember. I did one of my tantrums, let's say, before the board. I held up a map of Sequoia National Park, and I said, "Do you realize that everything you're talking about, all the access to Mineral King, is going to cut Sequoia National Park right in two? The access road will go right up that east fork of the Kaweah River, and nobody proposes anything different. If anything were proposed different, it would come from the south and cut the Golden Trout Wilderness right in two, which was only defacto at that time.

I remember people on the board of directors--I won't tell you who because I would caricature them, I'm afraid--who said, "Oh, I didn't know it was going to be in the national park." Well, where else would it be? All of their maps had shown it crossing right through the national park. Immediately, half of them turned around, and we had a vote with I think only one or two dissenting. Dave had just been standing up reporting to the board--which he felt was his obligation and, in those days, he did it politely--about the progress on the plans at Mineral King, the new development.

I stood up in outrage and said (I had only been on the board a short time), "How dare you? How dare anybody even think about this!" Dave stood up right afterward and said, "I take back everything I said," Those were his words. He said, "I take back everything I've said."

At that meeting the board turned around, and that was the beginning of the fight against the development at Mineral King. Then we were polarized. It was us against Disney, us against the Forest Service, and we ended up winning. Why are we so afraid to fight? If we find we end up winning at Echo Park, we end up winning

Litton: at Grand Canyon, and a terribly belated victory at the redwoods, at least it was something. We could have won bigger if we had worked harder to start with, and if we had identified our enemies and fought them instead of trying to play ball with them. That was the Mineral King situation. Next question! [laughs]

The funny thing is that the board then told the Kern-Kaweah chapter to oppose the Mineral King development. Here they had all gotten to be buddy-buddy with these Forest Service people, and then the chapter people were so mad that John Harper ended up leaving the club. As far as I know, he's not even a member anymore. Now, next question!

Lage: Let's continue talking about things that would shed light on Dave Brower's development as an ardent conservationist.

Litton: Brower, at one time, when he was on the board of directors of the Sierra Club [1949], voted--and he says this--in favor of having dams in the Grand Canyon. At that meeting at Jack London Square I came with a map. I was a stranger to these people: "Who is this punk, this upstart?" I held up this map, and Polly Dyer, who was on the board then and is still a great person and a strong conservationist, was the one who moved that the Sierra Club oppose the dams in the Grand Canyon. Of course, anybody who would vote against that would have to be against motherhood and all.

Lage: Did Robinson vote for it?

Litton: I don't know if Robinson was there. He had said this some time before, and I don't remember that he was still president.

Lage: No, I don't think he was still on the board then.

Litton: No, I don't think so. He was still around a lot. In fact, we saw a lot of him, and he would always get up and make sage comments at board meetings. How do they do it in Brazil? [laughs] Anyway, Bestor and I had gotten along for a while. Then after a while he, being a gentleman and a lawyer, would still go through the motions of getting along. But I, not being a gentleman, was rather openly insulting to him.

Brower's Contributions and Conflicts: Growth of the Club,
Publications, and Brower's Differences with the Board

Litton: The club had just kind of laid low. Don't forget that people have other things to do, and months and weeks and years go by sometimes in which the subject doesn't come up again. It really

Litton: wasn't until the internal fight in the club during the sixties, fight or dissension or whatever you want to call it, that the board meetings really became circuses. The T.V. cameras came, and they had up the big floodlights, and all the newspeople were there taking notes like mad and had their microphones going and all. That was really good for the club, in a way, because it got attention. As long as they spelled our name right! [laughter]

The things that Dave did that brought the membership of the club up rapidly were things that the Sierra Club, I think, doesn't even think of doing now. The club is not against them, but it's the money. The ads in the New York Times. It cost thousands and thousands of dollars each time they were put in. Those were very daring things because they used money that the club really didn't have. The next thing you know, all that little row of coupons across the bottom came in and brought in money and members and people who cared. They relied then on the Sierra Club to accomplish something that obviously was dear to everyone's heart, to save the Grand Canyon.

Lage: Were you in on any of the decision making when Dave made the decision to run these ads?

Litton: In an advisory way, yes. Well, I contributed to the decision. Dave used material that I produced, I'm sure. Certainly, on the redwoods he used quite a bit. Dave himself wasn't personally acquainted with the redwoods situation. Some others were. I certainly was. I started the thing that ended up with the Redwood Creek in the national park.

He also wasn't physically very conversant with the Grand Canyon. But generalizations are all it takes with a thing like that. In other words, they are going to take your Grand Canyon. You can't pick it all to pieces and say, "There's an inch here and a mile there and so forth." They are destroying it. In fact, I believe in playing as dirty as they do or worse. If the end is a noble one, let the chips fall where they may. We certainly aren't sorry we kept the dams out of the Grand Canyon, and if we lied to do it, fine.

Lage: That question of ends versus means, the question of being gentlemanly, was that something you and Dave would discuss? I know he has said similar things.

Litton: Yes, we had people in the club who said, "We must be gentlemen at all times." [laughs] There is no way! I mean, we are being gentlemen. If we're doing God's work, how can we be wrong? That's what the other side wanted because behind your back they were wielding that knife all the time. They wanted these gentlemanly discussions because they do those things on a plane that has nothing

Litton: to do with what they are really up to. If we're going to confine ourselves to that plane, and not get down here and play dirty the way they do, we won't have a chance. We're just manipulated, pushed around, maneuvered into any situation. That's been done by loggers and dam builders and grazers and everybody else that's had anything to do with extracting from the earth its natural resources or imposing pollution or whatever else, scarring up of the earth.

The trouble is that Dave had to report to the board, and I didn't and neither did Fred Eissler and other people, Eliot Porter. We could be independent, and he got to where he couldn't be. For a while he was almost independent, and then gradually it dawned on the old guard that some of their prerogatives were being taken away from them, that they weren't close enough to situations or to the day-to-day operations to be able to deal with or cope with things that were happening. While at first they had counted on Dave to relieve them of those burdens, they then perceived that in the course of relieving them of those burdens, he was also taking away their authority. He didn't sit down and plan that mathematically, to plot this and that to take their authority away. He just saw ways in which he felt the club had to go, and the only way to make it go that way fast was to make a decision and not wait six months for a board meeting. They didn't have board meetings very often in those days. They had one big one a year, I think, or one and a half; a little one and big one.*

Those kinds of decisions had to be made right on the spot. Dave made them based on what he perceived the club's policy to be or what his policy was or what the policy was of his cronies who got together. I wasn't one of his cronies. I don't think, on reflection, that he ever had any. He was always kind of distant in terms of having a clique that sat around with Dave and plotted things against the board. That never happened.

Lage: So it wasn't a group.

Litton: No, never. There were people who influenced him and ranted and raved at him that this and that ought to happen, and if he believed that, he would sometimes just take the bit in his teeth and do it. Usually he was sustained because the same people could rant and rave at the board later on. If things hadn't been done at the time that they were done, and they had waited for board action, why, they never would have been done. There were situations that came up before the

*Board meetings were held four times a year with executive committee meetings inbetween.--ed.

Litton: board and the consent calendar. The consent calendar items are the items that nobody argues about. You put that in front of the board, and they vote on that, and all those issues are taken care of at any meeting.

I would look at the consent calendar and be horrified at some of the things in there. Of course, if you quarreled with any part of it, it would be removed from the consent calendar, and then it would come up for debate. One of those was the Trail Peak ski area proposal. A consortium of people with money had gotten together with the idea that they would go into this national forest land in the Golden Trout Wilderness-to-be, which we had been working on so hard all this time, and put a big ski development there in a place where [laughs] the snow is all melted by the first of April. I mean, it's bare. There is never anything there to ski on. Anyway, if you've got enough money, and it's cold enough, you can always squirt water in the air and end up with a ski slope.

That came in on the consent calendar proposed by the Toiyabe Chapter in Reno. I guess they didn't know anything about it, or they wanted to appear reasonable to the skiing fraternity or whatever. I was just outraged at it. Of course, it didn't go through. It didn't pass.

Things like that were subjects on which Dave would have to decide. The trouble was that the people on the board who ended up opposing Dave, in many cases, had been very close to him earlier in their lives. They didn't see that he was dealing with these issues that were cut and dry, black and white, the Sierra Club position, and all that. What they saw was he was trying to build an empire and aggrandize himself with a publishing program. Now, in his view, the publishing program was a way toward money and toward influencing people who ought to be influenced. If you give away 530 books to congressmen and senators, on a subject that you are working on and that you care about, you don't make any money that way. But you may accomplish something in terms of what these books are supposed to help.

The very first book that the Sierra Club ever produced that really was a book--that is in the new era since Dave went in--was called This is Dinosaur.^{*} I had a great deal to do with that, but I had to do it undercover because I was Sunset's travel editor, and they didn't want me involved in controversy.

^{*}Wallace Stegner, ed., This is Dinosaur: Echo Park Country and Its Magic Rivers (New York, 1955).

Litton: Along came the Exhibit Format books. Those were done in black and white which, of course, was cheap. In those days, not too much color was done anyway. That was the perfect stage for Ansel Adams's material. You had these terrific books, most of which did not pinpoint any subject. They were just all over the place, like This is the American Earth.^{*} Pretty pictures of America with a little message by Nancy Newhall or whoever under each one about how lovely it is that we have Mount Whitney still there. It didn't do anything political. It showed the Sierra Club could publish books, and books like that weren't all so common then as they are now.

We had one or two books by Cedric Wright,^{**} who was another photographer who was more or less celebrated within Sierra Club ranks. These books sold pretty well and made money and, of course, they were popular with the board of directors, too, especially since one of the longest-standing directors was the photographer who was featured in most of them.

I was on the publications committee, I think almost from when it started. Dave started that and kind of packed it. He couldn't keep it packed because there were other people who wanted to be on it. As long as you didn't resign, you were on it. He got Bob Miller of the California Academy of Sciences and others on the committee who would be generally favorable to what Dave wanted to do and who wouldn't really care too much if the publishing program cost a lot of money and didn't make any money.

The next thing you know, Dave began thinking bigger. The next big step would be to have the books in color or, at least, some of them in color. He wanted to have it possible to do them in color. That brought in Eliot Porter. My feeling is that Ansel Adams responded the way most people would, that he didn't really want to see Eliot Porter celebrated. Eliot Porter took the edge off Adams having been celebrated all these years, and it showed something of a change in direction, or at least it showed less attention directed to Adams when somebody else is sharing the limelight.

I can't assign motives. I can't say what people think. But I do know that in the publications committee meetings, Ansel Adams began to criticize color as a medium; that is, that it wasn't really a good medium. It couldn't be controlled. It wasn't pretty. It didn't have impact, and that color was stepping out pretty far for

^{*}Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall, This is the American Earth (1960).

^{**}Cedric Wright, Words of the Earth, 1960.

Litton: the Sierra Club, and it was very risky. We shouldn't be fooling with it. Dave didn't make too big a point at first, but the way he would do these things, he would get a thing too far along to be able to retreat from it. He would bring on something that he thought would make everybody go "ooh" and "ah." Just in case it didn't, he would already have an investment in it, and that would make it impossible not to go "ooh" and "ah" from the beginning.

With Eliot Porter's pictures, Dave had already gone ahead and had the color separations made, which is the most expensive thing in publishing, and here were the proofs.

Lage: Was this the first Porter book, In Wildness [is the Preservation of the World, published October, 1962]?

Litton: The first book, In Wildness. Here were proofs. First, he brought out the color. For a year or two, he would show these things and kind of meekly and mildly make people aware, and more and more aware at each meeting, that this was something maybe we ought to get into: "Not yet, but we ought to work in that direction. Isn't this wonderful?" Everybody, since there was nothing immediate and nothing impending said, "Oh, yes, that's nice, isn't that lovely?" Not realizing that the next thing you know, they would have the publications committee in a position in which he could say, "But you okayed it," because they had said it was nice or would be a good idea to look into. "But you okayed it. That's what I understood." "Oh, no, we didn't mean that." "Oh, but you did. I did this, and I spent this."

I always thought that it was pretty good that he could get away with this. Of the accusations made against Dave--"You did this, and you did that"--in many cases, I would say, "Hurrah!" The accusations were made not because he did things; it was whether he should have done them or not. An executive director is an executive in my view.

##

Litton: One of the interesting things about this is that Dave was there to ease the work load, ease the burdens, and manage the club on a day-to-day basis. For a while, that's the way it worked out. Later on, just the perceived or believed need to keep the lid on Dave Brower occupied more time and took more energy on the part of the directors than would have been expended if they had never had an executive director. They got more and more involved, more deeply involved. They just kind of turned aside from everything else in the world--being Sierra Club people.

One of those who hadn't been in there from way back, but who, of course, became very visible, and I've never yet figured out how he ever found the time to do as much with, for, and about the Sierra

- Litton: Club as he has, is Ed Wayburn. He has always been available, and he has always had the option of taking on issues within the Sierra Club. I think he was reluctant to go against what Dave was trying to achieve for the club or for himself or for the earth. When Ed did [oppose Brower] at least he put on the appearance of being reluctant. That perhaps is what made him successful in opposing Dave--he did it with an appearance of reluctance. He didn't come batting at him head on. He had more or less the stance of a judge or King Solomon, let's say, who has to cut the baby in two and doesn't want to.
- Lage: How did you judge him as a conservationist?
- Litton: Wayburn?
- Lage: You had worked with him on the redwoods.
- Litton: Yes, Wayburn was and is, and his wife, Peggy, is hardworking, dedicated.
- Lage: Do they have the larger picture that you show so much evidence of and are as committed as you?
- Litton: Oh, I think they do. I think they have it with some mitigating features. In other words, they think more in terms of the realm of the possible. We can do this if we get going on it. We can accomplish this. Of course, Ed was embarrassed by the Diablo Canyon position. He has never been backward about coming right up to you and telling you what he thinks is wrong with you, except he will do it in a semi-joking way or in his sweet Georgia fashion, always the gentleman. He has said to me over and over again, "If you had been at that meeting where we took that vote in the first place, you could have stopped it, and we never would have been in this position." I said, "My God, is the Sierra Club going to depend on me as its conscience forever? Why should I have to be there? Why did you have to do it?" Even Dave said, "Don't do this now. We better look before we leap." Fred Eissler said, "Don't do it," because Fred was from down there [Santa Barbara] and he had some concept of what that land was all about. But poor Fred--I could say "poor me," but I've never felt that way--Fred was always being walked on. Yet there was never anybody more dedicated and more selfless about it.

You could see that some of the other people were old-line, and maybe they thought they had good reason for their position on Brower. They were in the Sierra Club as a matter of personal pride. In other words, when the club went up in the eyes of the world, they wanted to go up with it. What it accomplished was somewhat less important than how they were celebrated. They didn't want their prerogatives removed. They didn't want it taken away from them. They resented it when Dave Brower went into the limelight, and they were left out.

Litton: The thing they forgot was that the limelight wouldn't have been there without Dave Brower. It never had been there for them before. They had been important in the club, but the club wasn't important to anyone outside. When the club became important to the nation and was visible worldwide as accomplishing something, they wanted the credit for it, and they had earned very little credit. You could find people in lowly committees in the chapters who were doing a lot more than the members of the board were, and that applies to me as well as the rest of them.

##

Litton: I never knew whether I was a director or not. I had no interest in it. I would go to the board meetings sometimes. Later, I went to all of them but when things just kind of went along, I didn't see why I should sit there. I would get up and leave sometimes. I was very irresponsible. I would bring in the big cigars just to annoy some of the people who didn't like somebody smoking. I would remind them that the original Sierra Club's directors' meetings were all held around a camp fire, and the wind would blow the smoke in their faces, and it was a lot worse than a cigar!

Lage: Well, I'm glad you didn't bring one today! [laughs]

Litton: I don't do that, but I said, "Don't forget that the earth was born in fire, and the fire is part of the wilderness, and we wouldn't have any except for this." I don't really smoke, but I would do that just to annoy people. Larry Moss would move and ask the president to rule out smoking. August Frugè would chain-smoke cigars. He would smoke cigars all the time.

Lage: So you would have some on both sides.

Litton: Oh, yes, and a lot of them would smoke pipes and cigarettes. Some you wouldn't even believe would--Dave Brower! You wouldn't believe it anymore. Then they'd try to get a resolution to ban smoking, and finally it couldn't go through. We would veto it or bring up a point of order or table a motion. It was just a little of the silly fun that went on at the club board meetings. Finally, Larry Moss, with a great flourish would get up and leave the part of the table where he was sitting and go sit across the room somewhere.

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Litton: My contribution, if anything, was more a matter of attitudes than in day-to-day drudgery. I guess there was some drudgery because I can remember nights spent, I don't know how many, at the Sierra Club offices when everybody else was gone, putting together ads, brochures, bulletins, posters, all kinds of things. There wasn't any room in Mills Tower to do those things in the daytime. We didn't have days. We were working for a living, many of us. We worked in

Litton: the office at night at the time of the redwoods campaign, when the freeways were not only threatening the redwood state parks, but were already being built through the biggest one, Humboldt [Redwoods State Park]. We felt we had to put out broadsides, and they had to go to everyone. We would go there in the evening, Russ Butcher and I, and we would have the pictures, and we would have the sheet of layout paper. We would lay the thing out, and when people started coming into the offices the next morning, we'd have it done and shoot it off to the printer. We usually didn't ask anyone either, we didn't ask whether it was approved or not. It just went.

Within any organization, I think that's the way a lot of things have to be done. Yet, those who were in charge of the organization have to come back, and say, "But they have to be done under control." They say that because someone could infiltrate, come in, and have his own ax to grind, and that would be what this club would begin to stand for in the public eye. In fact, that's certainly true today. People are in the Sierra Club for all kinds of reasons, and they push right up to the top. I call it infiltration.

VI SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES: A PERSPECTIVE

Social Issues May Pervert Club Purposes and Alienate Old-Time Philanthropists

Litton: Social issues, which in themselves may be great, only pervert and dilute the Sierra Club's purposes.

There are all kinds of reasons given why social issues are Sierra Club issues, like labor disputes. "Well, these people deserve a better environment." [laughs] I say, "Everybody deserves a better environment." You can't single out one class or one race or whatever. I see it as political factions, unrelated to the wilderness, to enjoying, exploring, and rendering it accessible. It is unrelated to the Sierra Nevada, to the future of the earth. To these things the Sierra Club can say, "Fine, go do them, but don't do them as if they are Sierra Club issues."

One of the weaknesses in the club today, I think, one of its problems as far as money is concerned, is that "the right," the Republicans, whatever, the people who used to be the old-time philanthropists used to put big chunks of money into conservation of various kinds. They bought a grove of redwoods to have their name put on it. These people are, or perceive themselves to be, alienated by the Sierra Club because here's a bunch of fuzzy-headed pinkos pushing for all these other issues which, in some cases, they don't agree with. "The Sierra Club is all Democrats, so why should I--" That isn't the case one hundred percent, but there is that trend, there is that tendency.

Lage: As the club takes on more social issues?

Litton: Yes, if you can call them social issues. They are issues that are generally perceived to be social welfare, related to the under-privileged, the poor, although I don't think of American labor as

Litton: underprivileged these days. As the Sierra Club leans in that direction, let's say left, a lot of its directors blame anyone they can, including Dave Brower, for this situation. I mean the old directors who are right of center.

Lage: The retired directors?

Litton: Yes, people who are old enough to have made it and to communicate with the Rockefellers and so forth and so on or even those who are much more conservative than the Rockefeller. I am speaking of those who have the money, and who could help to accomplish things or who had the influence in Washington--who knows who has influence in Washington now. Those people are somewhat ruled out, miffed, alienated by an organization which they see as opposing their political ideals. Their ideals might just be that you work, that you earn what you have, that you start from the bottom--the Horatio Alger kind of thing. I'm getting myself all tangled up here now, but I think you see what I mean. If the Sierra Club gets involved even in such things as urban redevelopment, it can say, "That will keep the people in the cities, and they won't move out onto the agricultural land and hurt our food supply."

If you want to come back, you can say, "What do we care about our food supply? We're the Sierra Club. We care about the wilderness." Of course, it's so tangled up together that you can say, "As the production of food and fiber moves farther and farther away because people are moving out of town and forcing it away, it begins to impinge on what we used to think of as wilderness. The next thing you know, the wilderness is right next door, and everybody is there."

There are good arguments both ways: We should get involved in social issues which even in the most indirect way relate to saving the wilderness, or we shouldn't because we don't have the resources to do it. The other thing is that if we're going to push the way the Sierra Club Bulletin does for the underprivileged, taking these kids out to the wild [the Inner City Outings program] we're putting more people in the wilderness when we say we don't really believe in that. The people should do it because they crave it, because they want it, because they need it. Those who don't care, why should we care?

On the other hand, we think we have a kind of a religion, and we have to convert people to feeling a certain way. That's the other side of the argument. Now, how are we going to convert them if we don't take them out there and show them redwood trees or the sequoias or Lake Tahoe or whatever it is.

Lage: In 1970, I guess, you were involved in a debate on the board of directors over whether wilderness preservation should be the one major issue of the club. Do you recall that?

- Litton: No, I thought that was a running debate. Of course, it was never a formal debate. No, I'd like to hear it because maybe I can respond to it.
- Lage: I just remember a reference to this [December 1970 Board of Directors minutes], and maybe it was the first time that this issue was brought up so strongly, and maybe you continued the battle later over the question of whether the club should broaden its scope.
- Litton: I may have gotten into that kind of an argument. Everybody does one way or the other, and most of us sit on the fence.
- Lage: I gather, even though you are presenting both sides here, that you lean toward the idea that the club should be more restricted in its purposes.
- Litton: I think there is a good argument to be made for this. I'm not as strong on this as many people are.

One View of the Politics of Conservation: Democrats vs. Republicans

- Litton: I think the voting records done by the League of Conservation Voters on how our congressman votes, I think that's important. I think we should care. However, going on those records, we tend to find that the best records are held by Democrats over the last decade. Some of the strongest voting records though, even though they are fewer, are those of Republicans. Of course, when you go back into the past, it was a complete flip-flop. It was the other way around. The Republicans were the conservationists, partly because we could afford to be. The nation could afford it then. The Democrats were out to do what? In the world I grew up in, they were out to bootleg and rum-run and do all kinds of wicked things--strike and bomb buildings and all that sort of thing. That's how everybody was pigeonholed.

The League of Conservation Voters-type of thing leads to a Sierra Club president, the editors, and everyone else endorsing candidates. If you go purely by their visible conservation stances, you tend to endorse more in one party than the other, and a lot of Sierra Club members and perhaps some of the most valuable ones, may be of the other persuasion, and they resent that. They resent even--these are hardworking Sierra Club people--the Sierra Club telling them to vote for Jimmy Carter as opposed to Ronald Reagan.

Now, the Sierra Club Bulletin comes out, and I can't say right or wrong on this because I have mixed feelings on it now, but it came out deploring the election results. Some of these attitudes

Litton: may make it more difficult for us to have influence. On the other hand, I have never really believed in having influence on the wrong people.

Lage: That's what I was about to bring up.

Litton: I believe in getting rid of them!

Lage: Your statement is a little inconsistent.

Litton: It's inconsistent when you have a chance. Here we're stuck with James Watt (secretary of the interior). Well, we were stuck with [former secretary of the interior, Walter J.] Hickel, and he turned out to be a jewel compared to anything we've had since.

Lage: Not compared to [Cecil] Andrus, would you say?

Litton: Yes, believe it or not. As highly as I think of Andrus's motives and beliefs, he wasn't effective because he wasn't tough and strong. He wasn't willing to lose his job. He wasn't willing to be fired. Also, he wasn't in an administration that took strong stances for conservation. They were good stances, but they weren't enough to keep the administration in office. Now, let's say they couldn't have kept it in office, but other things could have. It's too bad in a way, because I think Reagan is pretty blind to the earth around him. We have never seen any evidence to the contrary, anyway. He says he never said, "You've seen one redwood tree, you've seen them all," that's irrelevant anyway. Anyone who will endorse the sagebrush rebellion* has got to be wrong. Reagan says he's an environmentalist.

Carter listened to environmentalists and took some action. At the same time, it's the guy who is working with you that you get most angry at when he doesn't go all the way with you. If the guy is on the other side, you've given him up to start with. You don't care because you're going to get rid of him. Those who disappoint us are more disturbing than those whom we never expect anything from in the first place.

I know there's inconsistency in saying, "If we treat the administration as if its being there is so terrible, they won't work with us." On the other hand, to finish up where I was headed, being

*The proposed wholesale transfer of western Bureau of Land Management wild lands from the federal government to the states, in the hopes that the lands will then be available for more intensive use by ranches, miners, etc.--ed.

Litton: politicians they will work with us. Nixon himself, they say, used to keep a little scale on his desk and weigh the mail. If you put cardboard in your letters, why, you had a better chance! Purely on chance, purely on the basis of the weight of public opinion, because I can't think of any other reason, he nixed the Everglades Jetport [Florida]. That was an executive order. Now, you can assign other motives to his nixing the Cross-Florida Barge Canal. He wiped that out. You could say he did it because it was a big public works project, and it was going to be expensive and therefore, it was Democratic, and it had also been endorsed by [John F.] Kennedy--but, he wiped it out. We shout hurrah for that. Maybe it will never come up again. We have to give that kind of credit.

Reagan himself took the Mineral King road out of the state highway system. That dealt a real blow to the plans for the development of Mineral King. It was already designated as a state highway and had been for many years. It was originally supposed to go clear across the Sierra.

Lage: Do you think that was Norman Livermore's [Governor Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Natural Resources in California] influence?

Litton: Yes, it could have been his influence. Also, it set well with someone like Reagan because it fit in with the idea of economy. It was going to be an expensive road and expensive to maintain. He could have been thinking along those lines, or he could have just been saying to himself that it looks good politically to take it out because there is a rising move against it.

The club has to play politics somewhat. It cannot follow a party line between Democrat and Republican. For one thing, even if we won, if we were on one side and won all the time, it wouldn't be the best thing because we might find that we were getting something that turned out we really didn't want. We have to recognize that although there seems to be a preponderance of good conservation ideals, motives, and conscience in the Democratic party, some of the strongest individuals, some of those we can deal with best, are in the Republican party. I think that some of the things that the Reagan administration has come in with and espoused and has said it was going to accomplish, are not only astounding but criminal, and they would be totally disastrous if they were ever accomplished. They won't last; at least, they won't be to the degree indicated.

Conservatism and Conservation: A Discussion

Lage: You mentioned on the phone something that was enticing. You said you thought conservative and conservation went together.

Litton: Well, they do. I mean, some people think conservative means you don't spend money. You are conservative fiscally. Of course, conservative can also mean you are happy with the status quo, and you don't want anything changed. If we could stop all development in natural areas in that sense, that would be conservative, wouldn't it? We would just end it, and there would be a status quo.

I think we'd rather have our conservation more dynamic than that. We'd like to put wildness back, and we want to put back certain other things. When the damage has been done, we want to restore--we should want to restore. We can even restore wilderness because there isn't enough untouched wilderness. In fact, there isn't any untouched wilderness. We want to restore, and we also want to be dynamic in that we influence people to care. You can't just sit on a subject and get that kind of influence.

Conservative, to someone as ancient as I am, means something that we apparently think we can't afford anymore--individualism, self-reliance, a non-welfare state. I mean, completely non-welfare except in the case of actual suffering. Nowadays, welfare is a very popular thing. It is an easy way not only to get by, but to get by very well. To get by better than if you were earning your living. You can point out lots of instances where people will go out of their way and do almost anything to qualify for one kind of welfare or another, even if it's unemployment. They say, "Well, that was paid for." It wasn't paid for by them. [laughs] It was paid for by somebody else. Social Security was paid for, but they probably won't get that because that's so far ahead that politicians don't really have to guarantee it. You think you're going to worry about that when you're ready to die. They're not going to be running for election when you're sixty-five or when most of us are. (I'm there now.)

Conservative means a world that is well ordered and not overpopulated, in which there are no deficits, in which you balance the budget; in which you, in some people's view, keep the downtrodden where they are so that those who are not downtrodden will not have to share. That's the way some of us--not I--but some of us perceive conservatism.

We've got so many things that are mislabeled now--liberal, for example.

Litton: Liberal now carries implications of a leftward leaning. Of course, that's too bad because you could be the most conservative person in the world and at the same time be the most liberal, in the old dictionary's definition. In other words, liberal really means generous, doesn't it? It really means generous. It doesn't mean that you have particular political preferences one way or the other, unless it's just to give everything away. Liberal really means generous. Unfortunately, giving everything away is it, but where do you get it? You take it away from someone whom you presume will be liberal enough to give it to you. He happens to be the conservative because he doesn't want you to take it away from him. He's conserving; that is, he's conserving his own. I think we're talking about the reactionary. The reactionary is a reaction to the actionary--in other words, someone who wants to move in a new direction, and the reactionary doesn't want him to.

Here I am playing around with words, but conservatives can still have minds, consciences, intellects, a love for beauty and the natural earth, and I think they do. On the other hand, while I think everyone's motives are selfish, in the usual definition there are the selfish ones who just want to use it for themselves; eat it up, not leave anything for anyone else.

Lage: You tie these things together, and I am guessing that you are describing yourself by this definition [of conservative].

Litton: I don't know.

Lage: Do you consider yourself a conservative in the sense that you described? Are you individualistic, self-reliant, and do you tie this with the love for beauty?

Litton: Of course, we don't really rely on ourselves, any of us, because it's become impossible. We have a structure now under which we live that prevents your being self-supporting. You may be supporting a whole lot of other people, but you can't support yourself because you are in a welfare state today. Some of the things that we all have to look forward to are being taken care of by others. Some of the comfort and security we enjoy--in fact, all of it really if you go to the roots of it--we have nothing to do with because it goes back to those who were before us, the founding fathers.

Some Thoughts on the American Heritage

Litton: We Americans were lucky in two ways. We came in and occupied a virgin country which had not had its resources extracted. But just as important as that, we had a basis, we had a background. Here I will sound terrible, I will sound chauvinistic (not male chauvinistic), you can say racist if you want to. There is none of that in me, I am sure, even though I think that diversity in nature, and in people, is a beautiful thing. It took millions of years to evolve and to come about, and now we're mixing it all up, and we're making a real mess of it. I look around the world now and think, "Oh, God, aren't people ugly, including me," and the fact that we put all this junk on ourselves.

Let's say weren't we lucky in terms of the kinds of people who came here and founded this nation, or who brought about the revolution. The reason I say that is (and you can get back into religion and everything else). Look at the rest of the Western Hemisphere where the resources were just as untampered with, where all the opportunities physically were the same, and people could do just as much with the land as we've done, and the land was just as rich, or in many cases richer, and look at the mess it's in. You only have to travel in Latin America--God, it's awful!

Lage: But haven't we done more to destroy or tame nature in the process?

Litton: Have we? Have you been to Mexico? I mean it is eaten down to the rocks. The population growth is, for a country that size, incredible. I think we have more of a conscience. You develop a conscience through need, of course. When you haven't got anything more, you say, "Why didn't we save it?" But on Venezuela or Colombia, you say, "It's a hot climate, people get lazy." That isn't really it because they didn't have to go there. Mexico doesn't have that problem. Argentina doesn't have that problem. Chile doesn't have that problem. Parts of Brazil, Bolivia have a temperate climate, the same thing we have. They are fractioned up into little countries, but that is because nobody federated them. The United States was, too. The thirteen colonies didn't amount to much, and they were all separate. We became one nation which is pretty homogenous now in its thinking. We don't stop to think that if you're part of the Louisiana Purchase, which went from Canada to the Mississippi Delta, that you're different.

There was a kind of organization brought on through our Constitution that enabled this country to get as comfortable as it is, and as we are. On the other hand, let's put it this way, and I don't want to get into this because it's a subject you could go on with all day, and it's sensitive, and I'm not competent to get

Litton: into it, but there is a religious motive behind the United States. Of course, it's now symbolized with the derisive term of "Wasp." In Latin America, there is no Wasp domination. It's all Rome--with the exception of a few little places like Surinam, and those really don't count. Partly because of that, and I think anyone would have to agree with this, you have this really out-of-control population growth now. The only reason it didn't grow faster before was that disease and all the other things took care of it. Venezuela has a population growth, and I believe it's still current, of seventeen percent a year. That means they double every seven years or something like that, and where are those people? Because of land reform everybody gets so much land. Everybody got thirty or forty acres on a grid that covered the whole country, and some of it was on mountain-side, and the government didn't provide them with an ox or a plow or anything else. You have Betancourt coming in and displacing Pérez Jiménez, displacing that kind of an agrarian economy, which was feudal, and now everybody has got his own piece and can't make a living on it; the people are all going to the cities and living in the barrios. They live in cardboard boxes, and they breed like flies.

That's what I'm getting at when I say that somewhere along the line we were terribly fortunate in our background which has given me the life and you the life that we live. Otherwise, we go down to Rio de Janeiro and the minute you get off the big walk in the front and go back to where the bulk of the people are living, you see the most miserable, abject poverty that they can't get away from, can't escape from. There's just no way out. We see that everywhere, but in this country, I may sound like a Boy Scout or something, there is a way out. Everybody has a chance. Those who say they don't haven't really tried, and I don't care what race or anything else they are.

VII CLARIFICATIONS, ELABORATIONS, AND SOME NEW THOUGHTS ON
CONSERVATION AND THE SIERRA CLUB

Diablo Canyon: An Embarrassment to the Club##

Litton: Diablo Canyon was an embarrassment to the club, or at least to the board, and they pulled all stops to get their position preserved; that is, saved.

Lage: Do you think they got locked into it?

Litton: Well, they felt they were locked in, but they weren't locked in on that anymore than Mineral King or anything else.

Lage: What were the dynamics in the Diablo Canyon case?

Litton: Because the club itself, through various means, was looking for a way out. This shows how small elements in an organization end up putting that organization's head on the chopping block. Everyone, with good will, was thinking they were finding a way out of a difficult situation--that is, the threat to the [Nipomo] dunes. The club didn't have to look for a way out. It did not have to find an alternative site for PG&E which PG&E had never even thought of. In fact, I shouldn't say that because it came up once, and PG&E rejected the whole idea of Diablo Canyon or the vicinity because of the fact that it had been considered as national park potential. That has come out since.

There was a certain amount of laziness in the board's actions or lack of time to do homework. The president [William Siri] of the Sierra Club said, "It's our position, and a very strong one and a very important one, that PG&E not be allowed to utilize these [Nipomo] dunes and destroy Pismo Beach and the clam beds"--most of which he didn't know anything about.

Litton: The board made its decision [in May 1966] in order to have this whole thing look like the Sierra Club was listening to its members and its chapters and its outlying groups, and that they were all part of the organization, and that their influence could be brought to bear, although in many cases it had not been allowed to be brought to bear. I think this is human nature; you don't want those people out there that you have allowed to exist because you now have chapters and committees to tell the club what it's going to do or establish its direction because you're the board of directors. You have been around forever and you want to keep the club going the way you want it to go. On lots of side issues, it's okay because then they will feel that their word is being listened to and that they're important.

I think the very fact that the chapter was asked to make this determination was either a contempt for the land or for the people in the chapter. It wasn't considered important enough for the board to make an issue of.

Lage: Do you mean at the beginning?

Litton: Yes, the Diablo Canyon situation. Kathy Jackson was asked by the president to see what she could do about an alternative, (not really) to deal with the dunes [February, 1965]. She was delegated, and I don't know whether she was chapter chairman then or not, in Santa Barbara [Los Padres Chapter]. It wasn't the biggest chapter in the world. She was a person who had faith in human nature, that everybody is good at heart, and they have only been misled because they don't know any better.

She would take people from the Union Oil Company and their families, invite them, get them to go to the dunes. She would take Pacific Gas and Electric Company people, who weren't really the top people but were certainly the top ones around there, to come out and enjoy nature walks and picnics. I certainly don't put her down for that. I think she had a very good conscience about what she was doing and wanted to do the right thing.

But this issue had too many ramifications to be dealt with on a local level. At the point where Diablo Creek enters the ocean, it comes out on the marine terrace, a grassy area typical of our coast. You find it in the Mendocino coast and San Mateo County. You've got the hills behind the marine terrace. Then next to the beach you've got bluffs, sometimes high, sometimes low, but they're always there.

Where there is a marine terrace in its native condition, and they are the most characteristic kind of coast we have in California with a few exceptions in the Los Angeles basin where the land is low for a short distance and in a few other places, you have an open piece

Litton: of ground that has no trees on it--it's grassy. Even though the grasses were not the same, it was grassy before the white man came, too. All the grasses, the native ones, have been replaced by the European annuals. Where streams come out to the ocean at the edges of marine terraces, they always occupy a little ravine, with at most a few little scrubby willows or bits of chamise or something in the bottom. The ravines can be honestly defined as windswept, treeless slots [as Diablo Canyon was defined when the board approved it as a site for PG&E power plant]. You could say that about any creek in California. It's true around Big Sur. It's true all over. The Marin County coast is the same way. Any small stream is that way. I guess you could even apply it to the Russian River, but let's keep it to the small streams like Diablo Creek: it has a windswept, treeless slot.

Someone went out on a boat, fishing or something, and looked at it, or someone just assumed that it was a windswept, treeless slot. The extent to which the Diablo Canyon project was going to overwhelm that whole area and occupy the upper canyon had never even been thought of. They couldn't conceive of anything like that.

Lage: Was this something that PG&E kept from them, do you think?

Litton: PG&E hadn't even thought of it either. They weren't going to go there. The windswept, treeless slot was bequeathed to PG&E by the Sierra Club as an alternative to the dunes. Well, PG&E began to see a rising tide of public opposition to its doing anything so visible as putting a power plant there in those dunes. It would be like the Moss Landing plant, only five times as big. Presumably it wouldn't put all that yellow dirt in the air, but it would certainly cause a lot of other disruptions of the natural scene.

I'm sure people from PG&E put their heads together, and I'm sure they wouldn't deny this, and they decided, "Hey, maybe that's a good idea. Nobody will notice it there. They won't be able to see it from the highway." That was one of the arguments the Sierra Club used. The Sierra Club Board of Directors thought, "Hey, there's an easy way out of this. It will get them out of the dunes." It didn't, at that time anyway. The board thought, "The situation will be solved by this, and we can move on to other things. Let's say this is fine." It didn't really take a big resolution to get the Diablo Canyon decision because the board of directors of the Sierra Club felt it wasn't going to stop PG&E anyway. "We're not making the laws." The board felt the Sierra Club was only influential insofar as PG&E or the state or whoever saw it as being influential. They felt the Sierra Club could not stop PG&E from doing anything. It could try to persuade them, and the way to persuade them was not to stop them from building the world's biggest or whatever-it-is nuclear plant, but to have them put it somewhere where it would be less troublesome.

Nuclear Power as an Alternative Energy Source

Litton: As you can see, in today's nuclear climate, Diablo Canyon is much, much more troublesome in terms of hazards than the dunes would have been.

Lage: Did you have any sense of nuclear danger at that time?

Litton: No. In fact, I didn't really care because there are too many people in the world anyway.

Lage: What was your concern?

Litton: I was concerned about the destruction of the coast, scarring the coast, ruining the scenery.

Lage: What about today? Do you have a concern about nuclear power today?

Litton: I know it's dangerous, we all do, and I know nuclear power is coming to an end. The sad thing about it is, we don't really talk about the alternatives to that. We know that it's not going to go on, no matter what the government blusters about, and [Dr. Edward] Teller is now saying the climate against nuclear power is only a bunch of nuts like Ralph Nader. We know nuclear power is coming to an end, and if it doesn't, we'll come to an end. Nuclear accidents are bound to happen, and so are all other kinds of accidents. They're not just going to be nuclear, but the nuclear thing can spread all over. We can't put a stop to it. Three-Mile Island is still going on, no matter what they say.

I have slightly different concerns in opposing nuclear power. I'm concerned about the excavation of the material that's used for developing the energy (uranium and then the development of plutonium), the land it takes, or the fact that because nuclear plants are recognized as hazardous, they are always being put in remote places. That's what I have against them. Electric generating plants should be like all the old ones: downtown. Los Angeles is a place I'm most familiar with. When you have a gas-fired furnace, you put it right where you want it so that you don't have to have hundreds of miles of transmission lines. Nuclear plants, by their nature, are put far away, and now the coal-fired plants are, too, because of what they do to the atmosphere. They are put away where people can't see them. That means long transmission lines which again destroy the beauty and glory and inspiration of nature. They just destroy the country.

Lage: They also use up a lot of energy themselves.

Litton: They use up a lot of the energy, and think of the energy it takes to make those wires and to make those towers and what it costs the consumer. Those things all have to be paid for, and every one of those rows of power lines has got a road that goes with it that's new and again an intrusion.

Lage: Again, it's wilderness preservation that is your priority.

Litton: Yes, and it doesn't even have to be wilderness; just a whole earth and an earth with integrity and beauty. It's not right to be developing power way off in New Mexico and sending it to Los Angeles. If that's the case, if we're in such a sorry state that we have to do that, then we better move Los Angeles to New Mexico and be closer to the power. But nobody wants to be close to it. That's the whole thing. People don't want to live with what they do. If you can't live with what you do, then you shouldn't be doing it. If you are going to have a nuclear plant, Diablo Canyon is more dangerous. There is one reason. Let's just take the atmospheric effect. The prevailing winds blow from the northwest in the summer all the time, every afternoon. They blow from the northwest to the southeast. That's the standard movement of air and water. The Alaskan Current, or whatever you want to call it, moves along the coast that way.

At the dunes it moves along the coast that way, and it comes to Point Sal and Point Conception, where nobody lives, and goes out to sea. There is really very little there, along the coast. Anyway, there is nobody living there until you get to Vandenberg Air Force Base, and they don't live on the shore there either.

Just southeast of Diablo Canyon, the land is also affected by the predominant currents and winds. Without my getting to be an authority on nuclear power, we know that's what people are worried about. You've got Avila, Grover City, Pismo Beach, Arroyo Grande, and other towns with lots of people living in them, and they are very close to the nuclear power plant in terms of actual miles of the air going over the mountains. If you are thinking in terms of a nuclear accident, disaster, or whatever, the physical threat is worse from Diablo Canyon even though it's more out of sight than it would be from the Nipomo Dunes. Nipomo Dunes are downwind of all those people; that is, of all the people nearby.

Nuclear power is wrong from that point of view. I believe that you shouldn't be putting people in one place, and then carrying everything there for them. Southern California used to have a wonderful life for the people in the small towns and the then small city that Los Angeles was because everything they needed appeared right there on the earth--the fish, the fowl, all the agricultural products. It was the richest place. Everything was there, and they not only had it right in their front yards, but were exporting it all over and making money with it.

Litton: Now what happens? Los Angeles County used to produce more milk and more dairy products than any state in the union, including the balance of California. They had a city that was named Dairyland because nothing was allowed there except dairies. You couldn't live there unless you had a dairy. You had to have five acres with cows on your land. Now, today the milk for Los Angeles comes in from the San Joaquin Valley in big tank trucks. It isn't just inflation. The costs of living are related to other things.

Where do the vegetables come from? Imperial Valley, Mexico. The L.A. Basin isn't an exporter of agricultural things anymore. It's an importer. The stuff has to come from somewhere else to what was the richest agricultural place in the world. Now it's coming from less rich, less valuable, less productive areas. Even those areas that are serving it now are not only threatened, but their productivity is being diminished. Take the Imperial Valley. Irrigation from the Colorado River has brought all the salts in there which have put a lot of that land out of production. It's all going to go out of production, or virtually all of it, when the Central Arizona Project starts functioning. That will happen unless they can buy the water from Arizona as they are talking about doing, buying it out. After all of these canals and pumping stations are built, then the Imperial Irrigation District and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California are saying Arizona ought to be willing to sell the water.

Of course, they'll be willing to sell it, and who pays for it? The people who buy those vegetables and buy that power in California. The only good thing about all this could be that it would make life so impossible in southern California that everybody would move away.

Lage: Where would they go?

Litton: God, who knows and who cares? Let them go to San Francisco! [laughter] No, I don't know where they would go. The point is that it gets down to population.

Lage: Have you gotten involved in population control?

Litton: Yes, involved in terms of supporting less population. I don't know anybody in my family that I wish hadn't been born, but just the same [laughs] I wouldn't have missed them if they hadn't. Population will be controlled whether we like it or not. It can be controlled on an earth that still is capable of supporting some fraction of what we have now, or it can be controlled by catastrophe which, in many part of the world, is already here. When you look at the Taureg children in North Africa who go along the streets scraping up any little bit of flour that falls out of a broken sack and taking it home to their mothers, it is heartbreaking and yet you realize that probably four-fifths of the people in the world are living on the brink of starvation.

Litton: One of the worst mistakes we make, according to some scientists, is that we try to feed them, that that only brings on more. You have heard demographers talk that way, that we can't do it. Why should we make things worse by trying to do it? For one thing there is a false hope involved that the United States is the cornucopia from which everything can come. The other thing is that you're only building up a bigger population when you sustain the one that's there. I don't think we're going to get off the earth onto other planets soon enough to make much difference. We never will.

Recent Environmental Activities: The MX Missile and the Turbines in the Glen Canyon Dam

Lage: What kinds of concerns or environmental activities do you focus on right now? Are you still involved? I know you are involved in Grand Canyon.

Litton: Do you mean immediate political things right now?

Lage: Yes.

Litton: I am involved with the sagebrush rebellion and the MX missile. First of all, the MX is no good strategically. Let's face it; everybody knows that. It's only a way for the air force to get its licks in because the army has missiles, and the navy has missiles, and the air force wants missiles. I don't know why the marines don't separate out and get their own missiles and the Boy Scouts and whoever. That's what it is really. It's all an upstaging thing, one branch opposed to the other. Offer the MX to the army, and they say, "We don't need that. We've got the Minuteman. We've got our missiles."

I would say the air force, which I am a veteran of, should have missiles when they are being flown by people. That's what you do in the air force. You sit there and drive. Well, there's the MX. The MX is so terribly destructive and money-wasting. In other words, the expense of the MX would be greater than all the costs of all the public works programs in the entire United States since the dawn of our history. Think of that. The projected interstate highway system is smaller than the road system that would be involved in this thing, in terms of miles.

Lage: How are you working on this? Is there a group?

Litton: There are groups, but I'm getting resolutions out of noninterested groups where I can because I think they are more vital. I'm going to groups of river outfitters, guides, the Bohemian Club, people who you would think, maybe, are on the fence about it. Sometimes you take a vote and say, "Vote now, and I'll write the resolution later and fix it up just the way you want it." If you can create the right climate with almost any group, present a thing a certain way so that you know the majority will side with you, very often the minority will be afraid to vote the other way. They'll just let it go by as a unanimous vote. That's what I'm finding now on the MX.

Lage: Now, those are groups that wouldn't traditionally be concerned with this.

Litton: They are not involved. Therefore, they have what is called "credibility." [laughs] I don't know why you don't have credibility when you are involved, but they become involved then. They are stuck with it. I want to keep this going with more and more; not just those two issues, but there are several others.

With the Grand Canyon, the main issue is the turbines in Glen Canyon Dam, the additional ones they are talking about. The point is, to the outsider hydro power is clean power. The dam is there. Why shouldn't it do everything it is capable of doing? The Bureau of Reclamation is not a water and power resources service like the Collector of Internal Revenue is not the Internal Revenue Service. As Will Rogers said, "Service is what a bull does to a cow." [laughter]

The thing they don't tell you is that Glen Canyon Dam is already squeezing every ounce of electricity out of that river. The only thing is, it's not doing it at hundred percent peaking. It's about eighty percent peaking because the turbines and the holes in the dam can only accommodate so much water. Let's say that's 32,000 cubic feet per second. They don't run it that high all the time--there's not enough water for even half of that--but very often on a summer day it will go to twenty-five or twenty-eight thousand because it's in the middle of the day when they need the most power. People in Phoenix--businesses in Phoenix more than individuals--are using all that air conditioning to cool these great big buildings that shouldn't be there.

Hydro power is easiest to use for peaking; that is, it's easy to adjust the intensity, the voltage. You can have a base load going with coal, which the whole country does now, and it's churning away, and it's got all that heat, and it's boiling that water. The base power, which is pretty constant night and day, is being carried by that. The people are flipping on their lights. The base load is being handled, but not by the dams that were built ostensibly for that. They can't do it anymore. The hydro power isn't there. It's

Litton: being done by thermal means; mostly coal, some oil, some nuclear, and some gas. Interestingly enough, the whole area of Los Angeles used to use nothing but a hundred percent natural gas for all of its thermal power.

Now, water can be turned on and off easily. This is something you can't do with heat--when you've got those furnaces going, they're going. That water is boiling. You can't stop it. You'd be wasting it if you just let the steam shoot off into the atmosphere. With hydro power, you turn a valve, and it goes on. You close the valve, and it goes off. That's all done now by computers which just measure the voltage and open and close the gates.

The dam has a couple of spare tunnels which were put in to build the dam with so they could bypass the river around it. They aren't using those. They were never made to house turbines--generators. The power is all being used, but some of it is being used for base load in order for them to use the whole river. In one year that whole river goes through there, and Lake Powell behind it is presumably up and down. Of course, it's up in the spring and summer and drops off in the winter as they are using up the melt from the preceding year, the snow. You've got a dam which is now capable of, and really is, utilizing all the energy in that river. It's utilizing it with a high--we'll take it during a typical summer day when someone might be on the river--of twenty-eight thousand cubic feet per second. That is an average of fifteen to eighteen thousand cubic feet per second and a low of three thousand cubic feet per second. It's three thousand cubic feet per second running down the Grand Canyon after it's come out of the turbines on its way to Lake Mead where what is left of it will go through more turbines after one-eighth of it has evaporated in the reservoirs. You've got three thousand there at the lowest, and you've got say twenty-five thousand at the highest. Between those two, the river fluctuates everyday up and down. Every twenty-four hours, it's that different. Well, that's ten to one, and that's a lot of difference. In nature it never did that. That has caused tremendous changes in the canyon.

What they've proposed, in order more fully to utilize nuclear power and coal-fired and other thermal power for base load, is to take the same average flow, only for about an hour or an hour and a half every day, when there is a peak demand for voltage, for power, and run it at fifty thousand cubic feet per second. Obviously, if you are going to do that, there isn't going to be the water to run it at any height at all the rest of the twenty-four hours. The water flow through the turbines goes between what is considered minimum release for maintaining fish life (which is total baloney), between nine hundred cubic feet per second; not nine thousand, but nine hundred cubic feet per second and fifty thousand everyday. That's

Litton: what they will do if they build these things, and they don't need an act of Congress. They figure that that's within their prerogative-- just to go ahead and do it. It's part of the maintenance of the power supply.

Instead of the difference being ten to one, which is bad enough, it will be more than fifty to one if we put these additional turbines in.

Lage: What effect will that have on the Colorado River?

Litton: It will mean nobody can run the river at all anymore. You say, "Why don't you just run it when it's high?" Because when you get down the river fifty miles, that high water doesn't come at noon. It comes to you at midnight. People will not be able to camp in the bottom of the canyon because wherever they go on any beach or any riverbank, which is the only place you can camp when you're down in the canyon, you're liable to have a wall of water come by in the middle of night and just take you away.

The effect will be that now with the high water, you still have a certain amount of beach. You have riparian habitat with plants and so forth. Interestingly enough, what is now acting to hold the beaches as the water goes up and down everyday are the roots of an invasive exotic plant, the tamarisk. The beaches are being held instead of being washed out competely, which was well on its way to to happening. Of course, eighty percent of all the beach area in the Grand Canyon is already gone now because of the way Glen Canyon Dam has been operated. The roots of the tamarisk will go down and hang on to things, and it's a plant that shouldn't be there. In fact, it gets in the way and it's a phreatophyte. But it is there, and we can see that things have somewhat stabilized themselves at a rate of three thousand cubic feet per second during the lows and anywhere from eighteen to twenty-five to twenty-eight thousand during the highs. The highs vary depending on what the demand for power is.

If that change takes place with fifty thousand cubic feet per second, the water will run everyday in the summer for a short time twice as high as it was before at the highest. There goes what's left, there go the places where wildlife took shelter, where people camped, where trees and plants of various kinds grew. Then when it goes down, of course, you leave this exposed area where, if anything-- a fish, an algae, anything--could establish itself in those highs, it would be left high and dry when the water goes down.

Lage: Have you testified to this effect recently?

Litton: No, there hasn't been any hearing. There hasn't been any opportunity. I've written resolutions on it, and they've passed. They've been sent to every congressman and every senator, but who reads them? It's a matter of repeating and repeating, and then maybe going to the New York Times and buying a page, so that people will see that it is a concern. They sure responded on those dams in the Grand Canyon. That's when the Sierra Club membership went sky-high. It was five thousand or so when Dave Brower went in as executive director. Well, it's 175,000 now, and not much of that growth has come since he went out. In fact, I think there have been times when the rate of growth has dropped. It hasn't actually continued to grow at the same rate.

More on Brower: His Allies, Enemies, and Successor in the Club

Lage: Would you have anything else to say about the club after Brower left in the early seventies.

Litton: We pretty well cleaned up Diablo Canyon one way or another. During the process of Brower's leaving [1969], the club got a lot of publicity because this didn't happen all at once. There was dissent in the publications end of things. It was embarrassing, at times, to be in those publications committee meetings, because Dave was squirming. He was on the hot seat, so to speak. Finally, it got to where it was quite strong. He was being accused of things, and I didn't like to see that happen because, in some cases, I felt the things he was accused of, although they were certainly true, were things he should have done anyway. I agreed with him; I would have done the same things.

The other members of the board, or let's say the publications committee, didn't always see it that way. Dave used to work for the University of California Press [as an editor]. I don't remember what his position was, but it was a fairly responsible one. August Frugè, as far as I know, still is with the University of California Press.

Lage: No, he's retired.

Litton: Oh, is he? Golly, we're all getting there. Anyway, he was the director.

##

Litton: August Frugè was the voice of the University of California Press and also, almost all the time if not all the time, was the chairman of the publications committee of the Sierra Club. Dave Brower had to answer to the committee when he came up with publishing ideas, which was every day or so, I mean all the time. Dave wanted his ideas to

Litton: be those that were acted upon. He brought up the idea, and he proposed, and the committee disposed and tried to dispose of more ideas than it managed to do because very often when Dave would come up with an idea, he already had it halfway along. Sometimes the members of the committee would say in jest, when Dave first brought up an idea about some book he wanted to publish, and he would have these exhibits, "Dave, why fool around with all this stuff. Just show us the book!" [laughter]

That's the way it got to be. Although I didn't see any evidence of this, it would be easy to imagine that August Frugè had a conflict of interest. Dave tended to let on, or to let people think that the reason August was so negative on the publishing program was not that he wanted to keep the club solvent or to determine better subjects for publishing or that we shouldn't be doing so much for some good reason, but that he didn't like the competition from the club. He didn't want it to compete with his department at the University of California Press. I didn't know that much about what went on in the university, and I didn't really see that there was anything competitive. Of course, every book that is on the shelf means a few fewer sales for the book next to it, or any other book for that matter. That was the way Dave felt about it. He felt that August didn't want the Sierra Club putting out books that would compete with his books.

Now, that was during the time that Dave was in the club, of course. I think that playing dirty, if you have a noble end, is fine. But some of the things that were done to Dave were not acceptable by any standards. Some people didn't like him for one reason or another, and I think some people felt they were snubbed by him because his personality was such that he was very often aloof, or he seemed aloof because he had something on his mind. He was probably going a mile a minute, and it just looked as if he was stuck-up and didn't want to talk to you. To some people he looked like he was being a snob, and that he picked those he would speak to, and others he didn't unless he had to for some reason to advance something he wanted to do.

He did get to be on the defensive, and he did tend to pull himself into his shell because he was being attacked quite a bit, and he never knew whether it was a friendly approach or not. He was always on guard. At one time, a fellow named James McCracken, who was the editor of the Yodeler, the Bay Chapter's paper, was so vicious it was incredible. He made it a personal thing. I can't think of anything I would ever had done to anyone that would have compared with it.

At one point--I believe he wrote this, I couldn't swear to it--in the Yodeler he told of all Dave's high crimes and misdemeanors. I mean, he really attacked him. The other chapters weren't that way.

Litton: They tended to follow suit, though, because they didn't have any real source of information. The situation was like Diablo Canyon and the controlling of the Bulletin by the president. He wouldn't let the word out as to what the Diablo Canyon issues were because it was embarrassing, because the members, obviously, if they really knew the facts, would be up in arms against the board of directors that had thrown away the last piece of California's coast.

This thing about Dave came out, and it told about how Dave had done all of these unauthorized things, and he had done these terrible, terrible things. Of course, they weren't terrible, terrible things because Dave Brower had become a symbol of the Sierra Club at the time when the Sierra Club needed something like that. Right or wrong, he had brought it into prominence and made it a big, influential organization, more than anybody else or all the rest of them put together.

Now, maybe it was because it was Dave Brower, or maybe it was because the Sierra Club now had an executive director. Maybe somebody else could have done the same thing without all of the stresses and strains, but I don't know about that. The article in the Yodeler told, among other things, about how Dave had gone to London and opened up a Sierra Club office there without any authorization.

Lage: After Dave left the club, you were still on the board for about three years [until May, 1973].

Litton: Yes, amazingly. I don't know why this happened, but I can't even remember how I got nominated. With Dave's leaving, out went his support. Some of those who had supported him were being dumped off the board because of the influences brought to bear on the membership. Brower was being discredited by everyone who was against him and in a position of strength to discredit him with the membership. Don't forget, a lot of them had the Sierra Club funds to go out and speak, go across the nation, buy their airline tickets and address chapters. I shouldn't say a lot of them; a few of them. Will Siri was one. They could make any points they wanted to, and maybe they weren't ostensibly there to attack Dave Brower, but naturally, if they were in the midst of a big confrontation with Dave Brower and his supporters, that would be an issue that could not be overlooked if they were addressing people on how to rake your back yard or whatever you do.

The directors who were against Brower, who tended to be the long-term, most powerful directors, used their directorships in order to discredit him in those ways that I mentioned; they used Sierra Club funds for that purpose. They could always argue that he had used funds that they hadn't authorized, too. Of course, those who supported Brower tended to be tainted the same way. Even though they were up for reelection, and I can't remember a hundred percent of those who were, Eliot Porter disappeared from the board, Larry Moss disappeared, Fred Eissler also disappeared right away.

Lage: No, Larry Moss stayed on and became president [1973-1974].

Litton: You're right. Fred Eissler, though, was a casualty of this right away, and part of the reason for that was the timing. The reelection campaign of each of these board members occurred at that time.

Lage: Eissler was up for reelection at that time, in '69.

Litton: Yes, right. I don't know when I was reelected again. I don't know why I was on the ballot. Was it automatic?

Lage: According to what I found in your papers, you weren't nominated by the nominating committee. You went on the ballot by petition in 1970.

Litton: Somebody else did the petitioning, then. I don't know why I would be reelected because I was one of the worst. I was the bad guy in the view of the real bad guys. Fred was one. I don't know when Eliot Porter went out. I forgot about Larry Moss, but you might have the dates right. What did he do?

Lage: He stayed on. He didn't have to be reelected [in 1969].

Litton: Oh, that was it. He stayed on and became president one year. I refused to support him when he asked for my vote. The board elected the president.

Lage: You didn't support him?

Litton: I basically supported him, but there was something he voted wrong on, and I said I wouldn't support him on account of that. He was hurt. Oh, I know what it was--Proposition 9.

Lage: You're not a slate man!

Litton: No! The whole thing was within the board, and he had to have a certain number of votes, and the first time he tried to be president [1972]--I guess it was the first time--he lost because when the time came for the vote, I just left the room. That was dirty, wasn't it? On the other hand, he had voted against our support of Proposition 9, so to me that made him wrong. Anyway, that shows how petty I am, how small I could be. On the other hand, he knew. I said, "If you do that, I won't support you." I didn't. I had to live up to my word. I forget who got it then, Ray Sherwin or somebody. Then Larry came along later. When I said he was dumped, I believe he never again was elected to the board. Of course, the nominating committee, which was the board's instrument, never nominated him again. That's what I meant. He stayed on, and Eliot Porter did too.

Litton: Nobody left immediately, but the next time around, Fred Eissler went off, and that's what I meant when I say they were casualties of the Brower dismissal.

Dave wasn't really dismissed, as you know, but the way it worked out, he resigned because he saw that he had to. He didn't have the support he needed.

Lage: How did you perceive that the business of the club went on in those next few years after Brower left?

Litton: Mike McCloskey [executive director, 1969-present] and I had always been friends. I had supported him for the job he held from way back. He used to be the northwest representative of the Sierra Club. I thought he was fine. He was the kind of mind that we needed anyway because he grasped things. He certainly didn't express himself, though, the way Brower did. He would never be a figurehead, and he still isn't, and maybe that was in tune with the times; that is, the board didn't want another figurehead.

Mike is in a job where he is an executive trying to figure out what the club wants him to do. He has ideas of his own, but with the legacy he has, he has had imposed on him more and more work, more and more of a job, and for that reason, more and more that has to be delegated, not to volunteers, but to more and more staff. Right afterwards, the Sierra Club, to the best of my knowledge, had to look for more staff people instead of fewer. With Brower gone, I would say Mike wasn't really ready for it, and yet at the same time, the club was shouting how poor it was because of Dave's misuse of funds. They were tending to forget that to make money, you have to spend money. It was the use of funds the way Dave did it that brought the club into prominence originally and meanwhile, perhaps underneath it all, it was getting deeper and deeper in the hole--like the government. The club no longer had what the world had seen as a spiritual leader. The headlines went with Brower. He continued to make them. The fact that he was out of the club really didn't mean he was out of business. He wasn't out of a job.

Friends of the Earth and the Whaling Controversy

Litton: Of course, Brower had his own club started in his mind before he left the Sierra Club because he knew he was going to go sometime. Friends of the Earth is really a bootstrap operation when you consider that Dave had nothing to start it with in the way of money or anything. He just had to use his connections and his influence in every way he could, not to put the Sierra Club down but to bring Friends of the Earth up. I'm sure that he diverted money that others would have

Litton: given to the Sierra Club into Friends of the Earth because people were friends of his or supported him. Gee, the strong and well-to-do supporters of Brower, in or out of the Sierra Club, you can count on the fingers of one hand, I think; that is, those who actually were ready to give the funds that it would take to start an organization.

Lage: Did you get involved in Friends of the Earth?

Litton: Yes, I was on the board of directors. I'm still on the board of advisors, I think, but those things last forever. They just grow and nobody ever goes off. I took a very negative attitude toward Dave when Friends of the Earth went against the Japanese whale boycott. That was reversing or going against what many members of its staff and the sharpest members of its staff felt. I always think Dave is a sucker for the young people who come and sit on his doorstep. After all, they're the ones who made him feel big or who made him big, let's put it that way. He is kind of the guru, if I can use that term again, or the high priest. He doesn't realize how subject he is to influence, and what a patsy he can be when people get to him with something that looks like a noble cause and, especially, if one or two of them are his own kids. I'm not sure just what effect Ken and Barbara [Brower] may have had on him, but I wouldn't care if it was Norway doing the whaling. I boycott them, too. I won't eat their damn sardines.

It has nothing to do with the whalers being Japanese, and race. It has to do with the nation of Japan being the biggest whaling nation in the world. It has to do with the Nissan Motor Company, which makes Datsun, owning the world's biggest whaling fleet, and it has to do with the fact that they completely violate all regulations, or whatever you want to call them, that the IWC [International Whaling Commission] comes up with, and they do it in every possible way. They flout the whole thing and, at the same time, they get around it by owning the whaling operations in Peru and Ecuador and wherever else they can get a toehold.

Christine Stevens is really the top-notch person on whales in the country. She's with the Animal Welfare Institute in Washington, D.C.; in fact, she is the Animal Welfare Institute. To me and to Christine Stevens the only effective tool that they would understand, that they could recognize and perceive and respond to, would be a boycott because Japan depends on us so much for so many things. There may be other reasons to boycott them. I don't know. Ford Company and Chrysler are all whining, but they are selling Japanese cars just the same; half the Chrysler cars are made in Japan.

The only thing they would perceive and could respond to would be that they stop whaling altogether, and if not we would boycott them. It's a lot more important to them to sell Panasonic stereos

Litton: than it is to kill whales. Most of the people in Japan who are in the new era and live the Western way wouldn't eat a whale anyway, but they say it's their source of protein, which is just hokum. There are kinds of products that come from whales that make some people wealthy. You can't do whaling on the scale that used to be done. For one thing, there isn't the market. Whale oil used to be what we lit our houses with, or at least some people did. You had to have whalebone for your corsets. [laughs]

Lage: How do you feel about the subsistence whaling of the Eskimos? That was another area where Friends of the Earth compromised a little.

Litton: As far as subsistence whaling is concerned, that's a complete fake. They don't do it for subsistence, although, of course, they do get something out of it, or they wouldn't be doing it. I would say that if subsistence on whales is traditional and part of their background, then they should do it in the traditional way. In other words, if it's traditional for them to kill whales, then it's traditional for them to throw that harpoon and have it made out of a piece of bone and to have to go out there in an umiak made out of skin in which they go out paddling, and not to be wearing nylon windbreakers and Polariod sunglasses when they do it. In other words, what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and if subsistence whaling is important, then they shouldn't have machine guns, outboard motors, explosive harpoons, nylon lines, and all that sort of thing to do it with. If they want to go out whaling, more power to them. If they want to go out there in a kayak and jump on a whale and start sticking him, fine. Then the whale has a chance. But the way it is, the whale has no chance.

I see these television shows where the Eskimos get up and make—are they Eskimos?, some of them are—make a strong case for subsistence whaling. The ones who have been to college and wouldn't go whaling on a bet. They still will make this case because now they have a lawyer for the whalers saying that this is their way of life. If it's their way of life, then let them get that paddle and paddle out there and do it, but let them not use a fifty-horsepower Johnson [outboard motors] and a telescopic sight on a Remington. That's what is so unequitable about all this, and we don't recognize it. We're all part of the problem, and civilization is as much responsible for destroying the earth as the numbers of people are. In fact, without civilization we couldn't have these numbers of people because the earth couldn't sustain us unless we had the technology to squeeze out its resources and convert them to our use.

My wife just came back from Africa, and it's something the way they go and look at wild animals now, in the great game parks. It's like a zoo.

Lage: Do you mean the civilized way that they look at the animals?

Litton: Well, they go out in their Land Rovers and they can't get out of the car because a lion might eat them. Wildlife there, as here, is so confined now that it looks like there is a lot of it because it's in such small areas.

Lage: It's really deceiving.

Litton: It's deceiving. They say that within twenty years the rhinoceroses in Africa, which is where most of them have always been, will be extinct. They are already extinct in Java, which has been a big source of rhinoceros horn. There is this crazy idea, that isn't substantiated by science at all, that the horn of the rhinoceros is an aphrodisiac. People in all the Oriental countries buy it like mad and give up fortunes for it. Of course, the elephants, for ivory, they're still going. But the rhinoceros is the one that is very close to extinction now. They are helpless because they really can't get away.

Reflections on the Current Effectiveness of the Sierra Club

Litton: I think the club has, in a sense, lost what they call "credibility" because it's lost strength. The Sierra Club is more of a nuisance to the extractors now, to those who are its natural enemies, than a threat. The extractors don't perceive it as a danger to their schemes anymore because they have been able to discredit it.

Lage: Is this because it doesn't take strong enough stands?

Litton: It's because it doesn't have a visible spokesperson who can come back with a quick answer and can be listened to. The charisma, if you want to call it that, is just missing. There is nobody in the Sierra Club who commands the headlines. If Dave Brower called up the media, they would send everybody over, and he would hold sway, and say, "Here's what it is," and it would be out on the wires, right then and there. Now, if you get a little thing on the back page and it quotes somebody in the Sierra Club, it almost always has to be Mike McCloskey or Ed Wayburn or somebody who is somewhat known, but it certainly doesn't throw the fear of God into PG&E or Georgia Pacific or the Department of the Interior. It was getting to the point where they really were concerned about "what will the Sierra Club say about this?"

I thought the way we really showed our strength was not "what will the Sierra Club say about it" because that could be questionable. Our position should always have been so predictable, so automatic, so

Litton: knee jerk, that they would say instead, "My God, wait 'til the Sierra Club hears about this. Then it's all going to hit the fan." They shouldn't have been able to think that they could have influenced Sierra Club responses, and that maybe we can do this in a certain way so that it won't bother the Sierra Club. It should bother the Sierra Club, and the Sierra Club should then turn around and put a stop to it.

Lage: Do you see the club, aside from not having the charisma, as having stands as strong as they used to have?

Litton: Regionally, the Sierra Club has been fragmented because chapters have grown up in the East and South and Midwest which originally you didn't have. They have more or less come to a point where they have gone their own way. They have taken up issues that are important to them, maybe regional issues. In some cases they have become national issues. I don't think the Sierra Club at home is capable any longer of adopting an issue that comes to it from the outside and making it a big national issue. They don't really know which ones to focus on.

Take the Congaree Swamp. It's a national issue and I think it had to come to prominence in the Sierra Club through its Carolina group. The Sierra Club wouldn't have heard of it otherwise. Everglades, you hear of things like that because that's already a national park. The Sierra Club does not know what to do, where to go, or what position to take in so many cases because positions are so contradictory. It's like saying, "We don't need Echo Park Dam because we've got oil shale." If we're going to use up all the water in the river to process oil shale, what difference does it make whether we have the dam or not?

The club has found a world that is more and more complex, in which the answers have to be more complex and are more and more difficult to find. The simple answers of "let's not do it here, let's do it there" are not before us anymore because we don't have those choices anymore. We've done it there. Now the answer is "are we willing to do it here, too?" In other words, are we going to go and do it in the dunes. Well, the time will come.

Logging is the worst thing. You can say, "You can take this piece of land down here because it's been impacted, and it has a road, and it isn't the same as it used to be. Okay, they took that land. Now what's left to be wilderness?"

All those choices we made really did hurt because the compromise just compromised us--because what is left is all that is left. Now where do we turn? What do we throw away next? As Dan Luten [Sierra Club activist] said, "You compromise with nature, and nature gets compromised." It's all gone. You can't keep yielding and still have something.

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Raymond J. Sherwin

CONSERVATIONIST, JUDGE, AND SIERRA CLUB PRESIDENT,
1960s-1970s

With an Introduction by
Nicholas A. Robinson

An Interview Conducted by
Ann Lage in 1980

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RAYMOND SHERWIN
as Sierra Club president
1971-1973



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INTRODUCTION

Ray Sherwin combines uncommon callings. He is a jurist of distinction, amply bearing the patience, perception and quiet courage demanded by the bench. At the same time, his abiding love of the land, inquiring mind, and spirit of independence inspires his advocacy of conservation. He was at once a judge of the California Superior Court for Solano County and the president of the Sierra Club.

Entitled to the deference owed judicial robes, Ray eschewed such barrier-building formality. He loved a new idea, substantive dialogue, a fresh vista; he pressed to the heart of whatever he sought. Ray had no compunction about picking up the phone, bypassing red-tape, and pursuing a matter. I still recall my amazement, as a third-year law student, receiving a telephone call from The Honorable Raymond J. Sherwin recruiting me to organize the club's international program. His cheerful and informally delivered mandate to me was irresistible.

Ray is much like his friend and fellow judge, William O. Douglas, with whom Ray and Janet Sherwin shared the fellowship of the trail and campfire. Ray presented Bill Douglas with the Sierra Club's John Muir Award in 1975. While other speakers held forth in the banquet after the award, Ray and Janet, Bill and Cathy Douglas, Lee and Marty Talbot, and my wife and I escaped for two hours of spirited discussion in the hotel bar; Ray simply rekindled the embers of goodwill and friendship, lighted while camping on the shores of Garnet Lake and nurtured along the John Muir Trail through Tuolumne Meadows.

Ray loved the process, whether of law or conservation. However dull the meeting, Ray could liven it up. His excitement in dealing with other people was contagious. As Sierra Club president, he would rush board decisions into action after an affirmative vote with a rap of his gavel and a resonant mix of parliamentary and judicial jargon: "Carried and So Ordered."

Enthusiastically enduring seemingly endless club meetings, Ray continued his international interests. He served as international vice-president and a member of the international committee. His intellect and eloquence propelled him into chairing the club's fourteenth wilderness conference. Ray's own words ring more clearly than can mine in introducing this oral history; I defer, then, to what Ray told the some 500 persons attending the conference on "EARTHCARE: Global Protection of Natural Areas," about himself and his cause:

The long views from the peaks of the Sierra Nevada are blurred now, for smog blows up through the high passes as if to escape from its own poisonous concentrations in the basins below.

Long ago, my father and I often tramped through these mountains, across the high desert flats and stands of Jeffrey pines, and over the sharp ridges. I remember the keen smell of sagebrush after a rain, of pines in the hot sun, and pennyroyal that we crushed inadvertently in the crevices among boulders. The winds were heavily laden even then, but we could see a hundred miles or more, and the odors had a clean touch, a feeling of natural rightness.

In my youth my homeland seemed an independent land, isolated and self-sufficient in its bigness, its giant cliffs, its wild storms, and the paucity of its human population. Now, I know that this long-discarded illusion was but a microcosm of one too long cherished throughout the world. For most people, there is just the beginning of a reluctant comprehension of the universal ties that bind all creatures and places, for good or ill. The patent signs repulse.

Raindrops, erstwhile symbols of purity, have become pregnant with residues from burning fossil fuels, carrying their burden from factories to forests, heedless of national boundaries.

Oceans, the sumps for mankind's discarded wastes, no longer able to cleanse them all or hide them in some remote Sargasso Sea, cast them up on beaches and estuaries. It is as if the waters wished to dissipate their resentment of our insult by wreaking vengeance on the cradles of animate things.

The soil, where not replaced by concrete or lost from erosion, threatens to become satiated and sterilized by energy-devouring fertilizers. Thus we cripple the earth's capacity to photosynthesize energy from the sun while we scramble to consume at accelerating rates the energy stored in past eons.

Need it be so?

In past wilderness conferences sponsored by the Sierra Club, our scientists and philosophers have appealed to North Americans to awaken to nature and its laws that condition and illuminate life. In this fourteenth conference, we join with National Audubon to enlist the concern of all people, everywhere.

Ray mastered the English tongue, as this text illustrates. Words are part of a judge's stock in trade. But more than words, Ray's contribution has been one of the spirit. He continues Muir's inspiration.

Nicholas A. Robinson
Director, Sierra Club

May 27, 1981
White Plains, New York

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Born in California's Owens Valley, east of the Sierra Nevada, Judge Raymond J. Sherwin seemed to have absorbed there both a love for the wild beauty of the setting and a skepticism toward the established institutions which had such an impact on the valley during the water wars of his youth. These strands came together in his activities with the Sierra Club, where he served as director, secretary, and president, and on numerous committees and task forces in the 1960s and 1970s.

Judge Sherwin's oral history begins with an exploration of the youthful experiences that contributed to his commitment to the club and the environmental cause, and in particular to his leading role in the club's fight against the Mammoth Pass Road through the Sierra. It goes on to discuss the upheaval in the club at the end of the 1960s, the subsequent healing and rebuilding process, and Sherwin's presidency [1971-1973], a period of administrative experimentation and vigorous action on a broad range of environmental issues. It makes apparent his contributions to the growth of the club's international program and to the welding into the national organization of the club's recently formed and far-flung chapters.

The four interview sessions with Judge Sherwin took place on April 21, 1980; October 20 and 27, 1980; and April 22, 1981. We met in his San Francisco home, where he and his wife, Janet, had moved after his retirement in 1979 as judge of the Solano County Superior Court. Janet, who shared with him many of the experiences discussed in the interviews, was present during some of the sessions and helped prod her husband's memory in a few instances.

Ray Sherwin's straightforward and sometimes outspoken manner came through in the interview situation, as did his warm and outgoing personality and his obvious joy in the many experiences he had as a Sierra Club officer. Not so apparent from the transcript is the fact that during the course of these interviews Sherwin was battling against terminal cancer. He died on September 4, 1981. Although he was in and out of the hospital several times over the course of the year in which the interviews took place, Sherwin was strong and feeling well enough to travel cross-country and also to ski at his Mammoth, California, cabin during his periods of remission. Except perhaps for the final session in April 1981, when his weariness shows through, his illness did not affect the interviews' quality.

Ray and Janet Sherwin reviewed the transcript for accuracy. He wished to consult minutes of the board of directors' meetings and his papers to search out facts which might have added to the fullness of his accounts, but lacked the energy in the final months. Fortunately, his very complete papers relating to his Sierra Club activities are available in The Bancroft Library; they serve as a valuable supplement to this oral history.

Ann Lage
Interviewer/Editor

March 1982
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California Berkeley



I FORMATIVE EXPERIENCES

[Interview 1: April 21, 1980]##

Eastern Sierran Setting

Lage: We are going to start tonight, Ray, talking about your background and your family and try to get some idea of what the roots of your current concerns were. Could you say what aspect of your background might have had the most lasting effect?

Sherwin: I could pick out two or three I think. It has to do both with the environment of the country where I was born and my family and immediate associates. I was born [in 1915] in Bishop, California, which is a small town in the Owens Valley. Bishop is at an elevation of about four thousand feet and on both the west and east is bordered by big mountains--the Sierra on the west and the White Mountain range on the east, both of which go up over fourteen thousand feet.

The setting is most beautiful. The eastern face of the Sierra is quite precipitous. The Sierra is a huge block that was tilted so that the western side of it is a gradual descent from the summit to the San Joaquin Valley and the Sacramento area, although it is cut by a precipitous canyon where the rivers come down. But the eastern edge is just almost a sheer face that descends from thirteen or fourteen thousand feet down to the valley in a very sharp angle. Although the White Mountain range on the east is not of the same geological history as the Sierra, it too is quite precipitous and is composed of much older rock so that although the Sierra range is largely granite, the mountains to the east are more colorful over much of their area.

The mountains are relatively lightly timbered on those parts that face the valley, although in each canyon there is not only a considerable amount of timber of pine and fir type, but also aspens and willows that are highly colored in the fall and very green in the summertime. On the eastern side (the White Mountain side) there

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 117.

Sherwin: is rather sparce, conifer type timber at the higher elevations. But it is quite barren of trees and flowers for much of the area that is exposed to view from the valley.

Parents From Pioneer Families

Sherwin: Rather than go further describing the typography now, I think I'll talk a little bit about my family. Both my father [James William Sherwin] and my mother [Idelle Gregory Sherwin] were from pioneer families. My father's favorite recreation was to take day trips up to the mountains on Sundays. When we would get up into the mountains, Dad and I and sometimes one or the other of my three sisters would go out hiking while Mother and whoever else was with us would take care of getting things ready for lunch or dinner, whatever the case may be.

Dad loved to roam the mountains, and he was very sensitive to all aspects of their beauty--visual, auditory, olfactory. If it had rained and you were in an area that was covered by sagebrush, you always had to stop and breathe deeply to drink in the odor of the wet sagebrush, or if it was a hot day and you were in a pine forest you would have to stop and absorb the odors of the pines under the sun, and the sunsets and the color of the flowers and the brush and the trees. It was something that I was never conscious of his talking about and teaching, but we just lived it so that it was among the things that just by osmosis got absorbed.

Lage: Things that he pointed out to you and the way he appreciated it.

Sherwin: Or we'd stop and maybe we wouldn't be talking, but we'd be looking, and he wouldn't have to talk because he'd be showing me by just stopping and looking.

Lage: What kind of work did he do?

Sherwin: Dad was originally a mining man. That was really his first love. At the time he first met Mother he was the superintendent at the south end mill at Bodie and was an expert on the cyanide process of extracting gold.

Lage: Bodie wasn't a ghost town in those days.

Sherwin: Oh, no, quite not. To carry this just a little bit further, after he and Mother were married in Bodie in 1900 and my oldest sister was born a year or a little bit later, and then especially after my second sister was born six years later, he decided that he had

Sherwin: to get out of the mining business. In the meanwhile, he and his brother had discovered and developed a gold mine at the old Casa Diablo Mountain which they sold so that each of them had enough to buy land in the Owens Valley, and that was how it was that they first established themselves in the Owens Valley.

Lage: Through gold?

Sherwin: Through selling this gold mine. Then Dad farmed and was a woodsman. He would cut wood up in the forests and bring it down to Bishop, and he would also cut wood with a circular saw for other people who had brought it in. Between that and farming, he occupied much of his time for all of the early years of my life that I can remember. It was only after I got out of school and he felt that liberty that he went back to his first love, which was mining.

Lage: He got out of mining because it wasn't secure enough?

Sherwin: It was always speculative. You might make a nickel today and a lot of money the next day or nothing at all. It was just so unpredictable. But mostly it was because in the places where you were working in the mines, there were no good schools. He was bound and determined that his family was going to have the opportunity at least to get a good education because in his youth things had happened in his family that made it necessary for him and his next older brother to abandon their ambitions when they were teenagers and go back and help out at home. That's another story. Shall we back up into that now?

Lage: Yes, if you think it's relevant.

Sherwin: My grandfather was studying medicine in Ohio, but came to San Francisco about 1849, when he got the gold fever along with everybody else. He was a very vigorous, visionary man.

Lage: Can you give me his full name?

Sherwin: James L. C. Sherwin. So he went up in the mountains. I'm really not certain about where all he did go, but among other places he went into the Quincy area of Plumas County and then gradually moved southward. Apparently, he had some facility for finding things, but in those days it was pretty rough and rugged and most of the time when you would find a small placer deposit, somebody else would crowd in on you. So he wound up down in Owens Valley during the Indian Wars. But he was of a temperament that I can appreciate. He was always doing things that were different from the bulk of the people around. So he made friends with the Indians.

Sherwin: He was an assemblyman from Plumas County in 1858 in the California Assembly.

Lage: You didn't know him?

Sherwin: He didn't die until he was ninety-three, and he was still alive when I was alive, but I don't remember him at all. Anyway, he was always sort of on the fringe of things except for this one political experience. I don't know whether he was a candidate again for the second time, but I think that he served only the one term. It was kind of fun to look back on the journals of that time and look at that.

He was a visionary and he never held on to any substantial properties, although he was among those who foresaw the potential value of water in California. He had some homesteads and locations on upper water sources, but he'd keep getting in too deep so everything was always mortgaged. Then one of my father's older sisters made an unfortunate marriage and came home with two or three kids, and so my father and my uncle had to go home and help out. Eventually my father ran away from home at about seventeen and struck out on his own. All of these factors prevented his going beyond what was the Bishop Academy, which was a sort of a high school-junior college educational institution in Bishop, and I guess a very good one.

But he was bound and determined that nothing like this was going to ever happen to his children.

Lage: Did he feel that way about his daughters as well?

Sherwin: Oh, yes. Except for my oldest sister, who didn't by choice, all of us have had at least a bachelor's [degree]. My next two older sisters both taught.

Lage: You were the youngest?

Sherwin: I was the youngest. My mother's family was a pioneer family, too. She was educated to be a schoolteacher and became a schoolteacher at age seventeen. Then, after going to the Stockton Normal School, she got a job at Fort Independence which is presently near the county seat of Inyo County. I think that she taught there only briefly because I know that as of 1898, she and her sister were the publishers of a newspaper in Bodie, and that's where she met and married my father.

Lage: Just the two of them, she and her sister?

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: Do you remember the name of the newspaper?

Sherwin: I've got a copy of it somewhere. She came from a pioneer family. Her father was frustrated in his attempts to enlist in the Civil War because he was too young. So he and a brother came West. He was a pony express rider briefly, and then he was a mule team driver into the Reno area. He became a guard at the Nevada State Prison in Carson City, where Mother was born, then established a ranch between Bodie and Aurora.

Mother was a member of a fairly large family also. She had one older sister who became her mother's helper. Mother was supposed to have been a boy, of course, so she became her father's helper. Mother was probably the most feminine person that ever was, but nevertheless she was out riding the range, wearing a 45 caliber pistol at her side [laughter] and helping the head of the family keep this toll station between Bodie and Aurora I think it was, five miles out of Bodie anyway. So it was a pretty rough and ready place, and they had to be able to defend themselves when emergencies arose, which they occasionally did. I just can't imagine my mother having any kind of a weapon in her hands.

Lage: As you knew her was she this type of woman?

Sherwin: Not at all.

Lage: Was she more independent than the average woman in that area?

Sherwin: Oh, I would suppose more independent, but certainly it didn't seem as if she would be capable of that kind of activity. She was a very strong-willed person. She and my father made a very good pair, and felt very congenial in spite of their great differences in some areas.

I never knew her, so a lot of this is hearsay from my sisters, but apparently my father's mother was an overly religious person. I don't know about his father at all. I doubt if he was any more than Dad was. Dad, if he had any religion at all, he found it in the mountains. But according to family gossip, my Grandmother Sherwin was so religious that the Methodist minister was always a guest at lunch on Sundays and was always given the best of everything. The kids often got second choice or third or fourth or fifth choice, and I suspect this is true because I know that Dad always made a fetish out of the kids coming first in his house.

Lage: Was religion a feature of your mother's side?

Sherwin: Mother was quite devout.

Janet Sherwin: She was socially religious.

Sherwin: Well, I suspect partly that. But she also had some rather fundamentalist opinions. Her father loved to argue, and Mother loved to talk, and it was remarkably unemotional. We would argue for hours over all kinds of subjects, including Darwin.

Lage: [laughs] That probably led to your legal training!

Sherwin: I don't know. Once upon a time you told me that you wanted to cover tonight the influences that might have shaped my choice of profession as well as my eventually getting into conservation. Mother did this very subtly. But I knew as early as being a freshman in high school that I wanted to be a lawyer and that if possible a judge.

Lage: Did she put this in your head, do you think?

Sherwin: I think she did. I'm not exactly sure how, but I'm certain she did because she was a very strong influence in that area certainly. Dad was always so tired from the physical labors that he did that we seldom talked except when we were rambling through the mountains.

Lage: Did this emphasis, or the kind of goals they set for you, set your family apart from other families in the area, or was the standard of education fairly high?

Sherwin: From such a small community and a small school, I think there was a rather large percentage of families that did help their youngsters go on to higher education. One of my classmates, a fellow by the name of Hugh Brierly, went on to law school at USC [University of Southern California] and at a very early age became the superior court judge in Inyo County. Unfortunately, he had rheumatic fever as a child and died a year after he took office of a heart attack. His father, who had been superintendent of schools, is now almost a hundred and still living--A. A. Brierly.

Another of my close friends then--no longer now because of a strange event which I don't think we need to discuss here--became an M. D., an orthoped, very successful. He settled in San Marino which is a very wealthy community in southern California. Another fellow went through UCLA and became a newspaper reporter. I don't know what has happened to him since. Another one became a dentist. Mind you, there are only 115 in the whole school. Some of the girls did very well, too. A couple of them did some good things in music, teaching, and other occupations.

Lage: I wonder if that is different from the usual rural community, and if it is, what the influence was there?

Sherwin: I don't know whether it was disproportionate to the other rural

Sherwin: communities or not. It seemed, after I had migrated to the Bay Area, that there was an unusual percentage of our tiny class that became professional people.

Boyhood in Bishop

Lage: Did the water war take place during your boyhood?

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: Did it have an influence?

Sherwin: Yes, it did. That, together with another bit of influence from my father--I think one reason that my father never belonged to any organized church was that he had a highly developed antipathy toward hypocrisy. He would be continually having a rough time trying to collect debts from a lot of these people who were ostensibly the most ardent supporters of the church. As a friend of mine from Vallejo with whom I went to work after the war would call them, they were the "front pew sitters." I was always warned never to trust them, and it was good advice! [laughter]

So if you know anything about the history of the Los Angeles invasion of the Owens Valley and later of Mono County, you will be aware of the fact that it was larded with all kinds of corruption and hypocrisy. Some very unfortunate things happened in our family that emphasized this.

There came a time when the handwriting seemed to be on the wall, so Dad sold the main ranch near Bishop and the thing was in escrow when the bank folded. The reason that it folded was because the two brothers that were the primary owners of it had been embezzling money for some time, according to their viewpoint, partially to sustain the fight against Los Angeles. I don't know what the truth of that is. But in any event, Dad lost most of what he built up over the years in that little episode.

Then later on, when he sold another ranch that we had a little farther away from Bishop in the area they call Sunland, a friend of his had been doing very well in the Guaranteed Building and Loan, which was the Besemeyer outfit. Besemeyer was eventually caught embezzling some eleven million dollars out of his outfit.

Lage: Did your dad lose that as well?

Sherwin: So we lost that, too. Well, we got a little bit back out of both,

Sherwin: but not the major part of it. So that didn't erase any of the skepticism that he had about social institutions of that kind.

Lage: When did this occur?

Sherwin: This was before we moved to Santa Clara County. We moved to Mountain View in Santa Clara County in the summer of 1932. I took my last year of high school in Mountain View Union High School, a big jump from a school of 115 to a school of 450 people. Can you imagine Mountain View having only 450 people in its high school? [laughs]

Lage: Shall we talk a little bit more about your own boyhood in Bishop and what your interests were there, or am I pushing you too fast? Is there something we've missed?

Sherwin: No, I don't know whether there is anything really worth remarking about my boyhood. I loved to go out with my dad or with anybody else and hike in the mountains. The school that we had was very good considering how small it was. We had some excellent teachers. They stimulated us to do a good deal of reading. Of course, most of my reading was pure trash, but nevertheless it was reading, and I did read a lot of biography and history. I loved English, and I loved mathematics.

It was in Bishop High School that I was first exposed and became aware of classical music. My family had always had a lot of music. Dad sang and played the harmonica. My sisters played the piano. One of my brother-in-laws played the banjo. My sisters were very popular, and we had a piano in the house. I can remember many an evening when they would have their friends over, and there would be a lot of singing and playing and popcorn or whatever. It was a lot of fun.

One of the things about going to school in a place like that was it was much freer from the viewpoint of what the kids were permitted to do. I suppose that one reason was that everybody knew everyone else. My mother was a member of the school board. One of my friend's mothers was at that time the superintendent of schools. If you set off a firecracker where you weren't supposed to set off a firecracker, all of Bishop knew it the next day. So this was, I suppose, an inhibitory force. I was dating when I was a freshman in high school, and my next older sister, Carol, was a very, very generous person. By the time I was a junior she bought a Model-A Ford with a rumble seat just before she became engaged with the fellow that she married later. I was working in a drug store, and I had the free use of that automobile. So we were always dating or going off up into the hills fishing and hunting.

Sherwin: There was a place down eight miles south of Bishop called Keough's Hot Springs. It was a swimming pool with natural hot springs feeding into the water and then right next door to it was an open air dance pavilion. In a small town like Bishop, it wasn't like it was in the urban community, if you talked about going to a public dance, everybody would think you were going to a house of prostitution or something like that, but that simply wasn't true. In fact, it was at Keough Hot Springs that Janet and I met eventually.

Lage: But later?

Sherwin: Considerably later. Every Saturday night there would be a local band that would play out in this open air dance pavilion. It was situated right underneath a very steep pyramid-shaped hill, and the full moon would come up over the mountains to the east and light up the dance pavilion and then set over the mountains to the west. It was a lot of fun, and everybody was there--old people, young people. There was a lot of fraternization between the generations. Most of us youngsters would be going to the social lodges to dances, as well as down to Keough's Hot Springs.

Anyway, it was much less inhibited, I think, than growing up in an urban area, and I'd dare say a lot less sophisticated, too.

Mountain View and San Jose State

Lage: Was the change great for you when you moved to Mountain View?

Sherwin: Yes, it was quite traumatic to me because I lost all of my friends immediately. Fortunately, I made a lot of new ones. They were very receptive in Mountain View.

Lage: Why did your family move?

Sherwin: We sold the property.

Lage: Were you selling the property because of the loss of the water?

Sherwin: Yes, everybody was leaving the valley in those days, going in all directions.

Lage: This was during the Depression?

Sherwin: Yes, right in the middle of it.

Lage: What did your father do?

Sherwin: My oldest sister was married to a fellow who had a variety store,

Sherwin: so they sold that in Bishop, and Dad went into partnership with him in this variety store in Mountain View. He loathed every second of it, so as soon as he possibly could he would go back to the mountains and do some mining then. It was a very valuable experience for me in a number of different ways. We had some sudden severe illnesses in the family so that the second half of my senior year at Mountain View I batched.

Lage: Lived on your own?

Sherwin: Yes. I was very lucky also in that they had some exceptionally good teachers in the high school there. There was a lady, a spinster--oh, fiftyish--who took an interest in me, and she would take me to the opera season and to the symphony season and to plays, along with a boy friend.

Lage: So this was a new aspect of life, a more sophisticated side. ##

Sherwin: Yes. At that time the opera was giving some performances of some operas that you don't hear all that often and one of the highlights was the Ring series with Loritz Melchior, Kirsten Flagstaff, Freiderick Schor, and others of that caliber. Through her generosity I heard [Feodor] Chaliapin, [Lawrence] Tibbet, Vladimir Horowitz, Brulovski, many of the great--

Lage: Did you say this was an English teacher?

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: Did she take you to San Francisco?

Sherwin: Yes, she became very close friends with all of the family. My dad and mother were very fond of her. She was a guest of ours up in that place we have in Mammoth Lakes. It was [during] one of her visits up there that she suffered an accident that eventually led to her death, which was always a sad thing in her remembrance. [pause] Well, let's see, we're in Mountain View.

Lage: In Mountain View getting ready for college.

Sherwin: I had a lot of breaks in Mountain View. I don't think that they are particularly relevant. I got my first taste of politics there.

Lage: What was that?

Sherwin: President of the student body at this high school.

Lage: In your first year?

Sherwin: I had some good friends.

Lage: Did you just spend one year there?

Sherwin: Yes. Then I went on to San Jose State, and it was at San Jose State that I had the opportunity to become more immersed in music. They had an extraordinarily good a cappella choir there, in which I sang and with which I traveled all over California. The choir director was a person who had graduated from St. Olafs and studied under F. Melius Christenson, who was in effect godfather of a cappella choir work in this country, and that was a lot of fun.

So then in my senior year several of us transferred to Cal at Berkeley. I took my last year in Berkeley before I went into law school at Boalt. I was lucky. One of the other fellows transferring at the same time I did from San Jose State to Cal was a fellow by the name of Bruce Allen who was a tenacious student, and we set up a bachelor's apartment at Berkeley. His example, I am sure, was responsible for my ever surviving law school! [laughter] He just made me ashamed of myself if I didn't study as he did, which was from 8:00 in the morning until 1:00 the next morning, day after day after day!

Lage: How did you survive?

Sherwin: I would take time off to go to the football games on Saturday afternoon and occasionally a basketball game during that season at night. Another friend of mine and I used to go down to the gym at 5:00 and work out playing basketball for an hour before we'd go home and take a shower and eat and then go back to work.

Boalt Law School in the Depression Years

Lage: What year did you enter Boalt?

Sherwin: In '37. The fellow that got me through law school is a fellow by the name of Bruce Allen who is now a judge in Santa Clara County. The fellow with whom I used to work out on the basketball court and who subsequently became the best man for Janet and me when we were married was Mel Cohn, who is now a Superior Court Judge in San Mateo County.

Lage: You all ended up in the same place?

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: Was there anything remarkable about law school that we should cover?

Sherwin: Of course, every student at law school thinks that his class was the best, but I really think that ours was! [laughter] I lived with Bruce Allen and his brother and a fellow who became a professor of history, Earl Pomeroy. Maybe you have run across his name somewhere. I lived with Bruce and his brother through my first two years of law school and with Earl just a semester, I think. Then I began to get restive about this severe schedule with Bruce, so my last year in law school I moved in with three other fellows, and we had a bachelor's apartment up there. One of these, a fellow by the name of Walter Chaffee, became law clerk to Justice Douglas after he graduated. He was a very bright man.

Another fellow went into the F.B.I., and a third one went down to Orange County and started practicing law. Those were the days when the best of the class getting out of law school were lucky if they got jobs in San Francisco at \$125 a month.

Lage: The Depression must have taken its toll.

Sherwin: Right. So there were about eight of us that took a federal civil service examination, and we all passed. We got these offers of jobs back in Washington, D.C. at \$166 a month. So we leapt at this, and I went to work for the Social Security Board. I guess it was not a total waste in that I learned a little bit about the workings of bureaucracy, but it was a big mistake as far as any professional advancement or any interest was concerned.

Meanwhile, I married Janet a year after I got out of law school and went back there to work. We were married back in Washington D.C. Then the war came along and the handwriting was on the wall.

Lage: When you were in law school in the midst of the Depression, what were people's general attitudes? Did you think this would be over in a few years and things would be back to normal? How were you preparing?

Sherwin: We were quite enthusiastic about the developments after Roosevelt became president because from a legal viewpoint there was a lot of ferment, things were rapidly changing. Do you remember the controversy over "the nine old men?" Two of our professors were intimately involved in the drafting of the Social Security Act. Barbara Armstrong, a professor of family law and of labor law was one of the professors and the other one was Dudley Odell McGovney, who was the constitutional law professor. Then we had Max Radin, who seldom lectured on the topic assigned for the day but was giving us this running comment about current history and the law--fascinating.

Lage: What was the general attitude? Was there a point of view at Boalt, pro or con, on the changes?

Sherwin: Oh, I think mostly pro; a few con. I would suppose that you would say that the attitude was some impatience. Let's get on with it. Let's not fuss around with these notions that are no longer applicable to this society.

Lage: So you felt a sense of hope, I gather, from what you are saying.

Sherwin: Oh, yes; oh, indeed yes. We did have some extraordinary people in our class. Dean Rusk, who eventually became secretary of state--

Lage: He was in your law school class?

Sherwin: Yes, he was the dean of women at Mills College at the time and a teacher of history at Mills College. Janet had him, and he was going to law school at the same time and graduated with our class.

Sherwin: We had almost a dozen judges out of our class, out of the seventy-two that eventually graduated: three federal judges, Lloyd Burke, Tom McBride, and Don Crocker; and about eight superior court judges, Bruce Allen, Mel Cohn, Irving Purless, Bill Dozier, Don Wilkerson, among others.

Lage: Would you say that your own views and your later concerns were greatly influenced by the experience of a youth during the Depression?

Sherwin: I suppose so. I think it gave us all a viewpoint of skepticism toward the institutions that had existed and a belief that the world would not come to an end if you tampered with them and tried to improve them, including private industry. [chuckles]

I think that the majority of the people in our class were sympathetic towards the New Deal. They may have been a little critical of some of the things that were done, some of the means used.

Lage: Were they sympathetic to the enlargement of the Supreme Court?

Sherwin: I don't think that they were sympathetic towards that particular mode of dealing with the problem of the Supreme Court, but they were certainly great admirers of people like Douglas and Jackson and Black and, of course, always of Cardozo and Holmes and Brandeis, much more so than the more conservative Supreme Court Justices. I dare say that even the conservatives of our class would now look upon Burger with some considerable scorn.

Wartime Service

Lage: Should we [discuss] anything about your war experience that is relevant?

Sherwin: I don't think so.

Lage: Tell us what you did for the record.

Sherwin: After December 7, 1941, Janet and I both realized that I was going to have to go some way or another. So I started looking around and I saw that the Army was looking for people for their ski mountaineering corps. I thought that this was just up my alley. So I persuaded her to waive our 3-A classification, and I applied for a commission. In three weeks I got back a card from the draft board to the effect that since Janet had waived the 3-A classification I was now 1-A, and therefore subject to being drafted. I didn't like the idea of being drafted as a private in the Army. So Janet had a cousin who had stood up for her at our wedding in lieu of her father who had just had a flood in the drugstore at the North Gate [Berkeley] and couldn't make it. He was lieutenant commander in the Navy Air Corps who at the time this occurred had become the executive officer on the aircraft carrier, Enterprise, one of the more exciting ships. So I asked him for a recommendation and he was good enough, being a sturdy family man, to extend it, knowing nothing whatsoever about me! [laughs] So I got a commission in the Navy, and I went to a quick training course in Chicago for sixty days and then I went out to the South Pacific on the battleship Washington, which was exciting at first because three days after I got on board the ship we were in the middle of a battle of Savo Island, and I didn't know what on earth was going on. Such confusion--

Lage: What about your ski mountaineering?

Sherwin: I've never heard from them to this day. I still haven't heard from them! [laughter]

Lage: Was that the same as the Tenth Mountain Division that I've heard so much about?

Sherwin: I suppose so. Well, Dave Brower was a member of it, so ask him.

Lage: He was tenth.

Sherwin: I don't know. I never heard from them. Dave didn't know me then, so I couldn't put this "desertion" of me at his shoes! [laughter]

So later, in the middle of the Kwajalein campaign, the Washington upon which I was stationed had the misfortune of colliding with another battleship, the Indiana. So we were knocked out of action

Sherwin: for quite a period of time and I wound up being transferred for training--naturally, being a lawyer--at an advance fire control school. This has to do with the aiming of large guns. So then I became after that, gunnery officer at an anti-aircraft training center at Pacific Beach in San Diego. I was that until about three months before the Japanese surrendered when I went on the staff of the Pacific training command in anti-aircraft weaponry.

Lage: Nothing relating to anything?

Sherwin: No, certainly not to law! [laughter] The Navy works in mysterious ways. It's strange that they mostly turn out right because most of us who had similar experience had turned out to be pretty fair officers!

Lage: So maybe they know what they're doing.

Sherwin: I told you I had always been good at math, so the trigonometry of ballistics and ballistics control was fairly easy for me. Most of the rest of it was just learning something by rote.

Judgeship in Solano County

Sherwin: The experience back on the Social Security Board had made me vow that regardless of what happened, I would not go back to federal civil service. As soon as I got released from service, I went to see the secretary of the law school who is a friend of mine, and she in turn had a friend, a fellow by the name of John J. Bradley up in Vallejo. Jack at that time was justice of the peace. He was practicing law. He was chairman of the Democratic Central Committee of Solano County. he was a co-partner in a string of restaurants, and he was in the hospital with ulcers--naturally! So he needed help, and I went to work for Jack. I went to work in January of 1946, and in July of 1948 Jack decided that he had enough of being J. P., so he pulled the strings that succeeded in getting the board of supervisors to appoint me as J. P.

Then we had a peculiar situation in the county. About that time they fell to reorganizing all of the inferior courts in the state of California. What they did was to combine them all into municipal courts wherever there was a district that had at least 40,000 people in it.

In those cases where there were more than one judge and the

Sherwin: municipal court wouldn't have been big enough for two judges, they had a provision in the constitution, or maybe the statutes enacted to carry out the amended constitution, that if there was more than one candidate for this single office, the municipal court would not become effective for another year. Otherwise, if there was only one it would go into effect on January 1, 1952. Well, we had two. One was the Vallejo police judge, and the other one was I. The Vallejo police judgeship had had a bizarre history just prior to that time. The city had been reorganized, had an anti-vice drive, and adopted a new charter just a few years before that.

One of our friends who was a very conscientious fellow had been appointed to the judge of the police court after I had been in office maybe a year. (These dates are kind of fuzzy.) Unfortunately, this fellow, conscientious as he was, was also a little bit arbitrary and opinionated. So he managed to infuriate most of the members of the bar that had occasion to practice in front of him and a good number of the citizens because he was so rigid. So the city council wouldn't reappoint him, but there wasn't any other qualified lawyer who would take the job because to take the job in his place would in the public eye look as if he favored vice.

So the city council was sitting there with mud in its face in effect when a stranger stood up in the council chambers and announced that if they'd appoint him, he'd take the job, a fellow from out of the county. But he turned out to be an utter disaster. He not only was so mixed up that nobody could figure out what he was doing, he didn't know. If you looked at some of the minutes that the poor clerk tried to keep of what he was saying when he was sentencing a prisoner, it was just--

Lage: But he was a judge?

Sherwin: He became appointed judge, but he was a total loss. So an elderly lawyer who had been the president of the state bar undertook with the city council to be appointed to the police judge for the half year that remained of 1951 and specifically for the purpose of just holding the fort, and then he would resign on December 31 so that I could be the muni judge, and that's the way it turned out.

Then four years later my predecessor in the superior court decided to retire at the end of his term. He was a man quite well along in years, a fine scholar but a very difficult person because he was hot tempered and tended to have a great capacity for sarcasm. He didn't want to retire so that the governor could appoint a successor because he was a very conservative Republican. At that time Goodwin Knight was governor of the state of California, and he was damned if he'd let that flaming liberal appoint his successor!

Sherwin: [laughter] So two of us announced for election to take his place, and I was lucky enough to win. That was 1956. I became a judge of the superior court in January of 1957.

Lage: Was there any campaigning in that election?

Sherwin: Oh, yes, but nothing like it is in the country today. I think my campaign cost a total of about \$3,600, and this was a countywide campaign. This was mostly speeches and shoe leather--punching doorbells and talking to people.

Lage: So it wasn't a real political campaign?

Sherwin: Oh, yes, nonpartison though because my opponent was also a Democrat.

Early Sierra Club Involvement: Opposing the Mammoth Pass Road

Sherwin: In Vallejo most of my closest friends were outdoors people. It was a relatively small community, too, so you kept running across the same people in different organizations that every ambitious young man joined and enjoyed--the Junior Chamber of Commerce, the Kiwanis Club, whatever. So among the other friends was a fellow by the name of "Doc" Pierce, Edwin B. Pierce, who was a bachelor, who was the scoutmaster of an explorers group of scouts, who did everything. They would go up in the Sierra in the wintertime. They would go to Death Valley in the spring. They would go to the Grand Tetons in the summer. I think he took them to the Boundary Waters Canoe area--everyplace.

He told me one day that I ought to be a member of the Sierra Club, and he offered to sponsor me. So I joined the Sierra Club, knowing almost nothing about it. He represented it as an outdoors club interested in conservation. [He said], "I think that you'll like it, and I think maybe you can do something for it."

Lage: This was 1954?

Sherwin: I think. I'm not a hundred percent certain about that date. But I think it was in 1954. After I joined the club Randal Dickey, a lawyer from Alameda County who had practiced in my court (and again I'm very hazy on these dates; this may or may not have been after I had been superior court judge in 1957), learned of my interest and suggested to me that he'd like to have me come down and sit in on the Sierra Club Conservation Committee meetings and see if I liked it. So I did, and I felt about as useless as a person could possibly feel when they were sitting there with some of these people talking about problems that I had never heard of and places that were all strange to me.

Lage: It hadn't been something that had been in your consciousness?

Sherwin: No, not really; not that concretely. I was always offended by what Los Angeles had done to the Owens Valley and to the Mono Basin. When Dad and I were hiking it was always a very unpleasant reaction on both of our parts when we had run across somebody's dump of tin cans, that kind of thing, but I had never been conscious of any specific conservation problems until Randal Dickey drafted me into the Conservation Committee. Then he thought of a specific job that he wanted to give me, so he asked me if I'd like to tackle the problem of the Mammoth Pass Road. So I said, "Sure," and I hadn't the faintest idea of what I was getting into!

Lage: But you had the place at Mammoth, so you were familiar with the area.

Sherwin: Oh, yes, right. The first thing he suggested to me was that I should take a look at the files, so I went and got somebody's permission to take the files. I think there were roughly one and a half filing cabinets full of material on this problem. Then I proceeded to try and read it.

Lage: Was this 1957 or so?

Sherwin: I think just about; maybe a year later or more. So the first thing I did was to read all of these files and then I decided that I wasn't going to remember anything about what I had read unless I organized them in my mind. In order to do that I decided that what I better do would be to try to write a summary of it. So I started to try to prepare that article for the Sierra Club Bulletin about it to bring it up to date. In actually writing it maybe Genny [Schumacher] Smith did more than I did. She is a very conscientious editor. She cut and slashed and made suggestions here and there and eventually it got published.

Lage: The first article I came across (and maybe I skipped something) was in the sixties ["Mammoth Pass Road, SCB, Sept.--Oct., 1966, p. 15].

Sherwin: Was it that late? I'm quite certain that the first exposure that I had with the bureaucracy in connection with the Mammoth Pass Road problem was in Fresno where the Federal Bureau of Public Roads under an engineer by the name of Ferrin had a public meeting as to whether the road by way of Mammoth Pass or Minaret Summit was feasible and probably economical. So several of us appeared there [1961], and it reminds me of some of the subsequent appearances that we have made in front of such people as representatives of the State Department. [chuckles] This was all a great exercise that means nothing. They had decided what they were going to do before the meetings were held.

Lage: So the public hearing was just a show? ##

Sherwin: Yes. After the decision of the Federal Bureau of Public Roads to the effect that the route was feasible and economic and it was a good prospect for an all-weather route, the road route was put into the Forest Service system as Forest Highway 100, and it was also made eligible for federal aid to secondary roads. I'm not certain about the number--I think it was Secondary Road Number 952 or 962 or something like this--but they could never prune enough money out of it to actually get the project off the ground. Incidentally, the chairman of the committee to support the road was Maynard Munger Jr.'s father--Maynard Munger who went on the board of directors for Sierra Club at the same time I did.

Lage: Was he from that area?

Sherwin: He was a businessman from Fresno. Eventually the promoters of the road decided to try to get the money out of the state. There were a lot of people, incidently, [who] meanwhile had been working on behalf of the people who were promoting the road. Bernie Sisk, the longtime congressman from that area was a prominent figure in that.

Lage: Who were the people supporting them basically?

Sherwin: The chambers of commerce of Madera, Fresno, and the northern communities in the Central Valley.

Lage: Did they think it would promote business in their areas?

Sherwin: Oh, yes. They argued a number of things. First, they argued that it was necessary for the country's defense. The war department negated that. They thought it would be a good route for shipping produce from the Fresno area east to outlets in Kansas and even farther east than that. That turned out to be a mistake or not true anyway because the trucking companies who really studied the matter determined that actually it would probably not be used because of the economics of the elevation and the speeds involved. Even if it were built, they probably would still send their trucks either north or south before going on to the East.

They argued that it would be a great all-weather route to their recreation areas of the east side of the Sierra, especially Mammoth Mountain, after Mammoth Mountain got really going as a number-one ski area.

It was determined that that would be much too expensive. I'm sort of telescoping this into the next thing that happened, [which] was that they passed the joint resolution in the state legislature

Sherwin: calling upon the state highway department to make a study about the feasibility of this road, even though one had already been made by the federal highway department. The state's study came just exactly 180 degrees different from the federal study. [1965, 1966]

It was upon their data that we relied in preparing for this assembly committee meeting--snow removal, construction--[it was] hopelessly expensive. So at this first meeting before the California State Assembly Transportation Committee [April 4-18, 1967] we were well prepared visually with charts and tables and were able to present facts which clearly demonstrated that each of the arguments advanced by the proponents of the road was wrong.*

We also had the impressive help of a group of youngsters from the Davis campus of the University of California. Some fellows and girls headed by a young man by the name of Bob Schneider prepared a presentation and came and testified before this assembly committee. I was astounded at how well grounded they were on all the necessary facts, and they made quite an impression on the committee.

The result was that the Assembly Transportation Committee turned the thing down, oh, I think it was seven to one or something like that. The people who were promoting it were taken by surprise by this presentation. So the next year they came back and they were much better prepared, and they had also dug up some other facts which they presented at that time.

This makes it necessary for me to go back awhile. Way back in about 1937, there was a quite different attitude about the Sierra. As you will recall, the original principles of the Sierra Club included the idea of making these beautiful places accessible to the public. Along about 1937, the Sierra Club Board of Directors had passed the resolution which was agreeable towards the setting aside of a corridor by way of Mammoth Pass or Minaret Summit Road, rather than putting a road across in the south, by way of the Porterville route. They reasoned that here the Sierra broke down so that there were these two low passes, either of which might have been feasible for a road. It would be better to go through the Mammoth Mountain country because it was less rugged and therefore "less suitable for wilderness"--all this is in quotations--than to build one over the higher mountains to the south.

*See "Mammoth Pass Road--the Recurring Crisis," SCB, March 1967, p. 17.

Sherwin: So we had a little trouble with the Sierra Club's change of mind and eventual resolutions during the sixties against the Mammoth Pass Road.

Lage: Was there any feeling in the sixties that they shouldn't change those earlier resolutions?

Sherwin: Yes, there were some feelings among the Sierra Club, as well as others, to the effect that we were sort of going back on our commitments. The same kind of thing has subsequently happened with respect to the Diablo Canyon nuclear reactor.

Lage: And Mineral King.

Sherwin: Well, Mineral King was different because that to which the Sierra Club had once acquiesced in the Mineral King area was a project of a different order of magnitude than that which was eventually proposed between the Forest Service and Disney. That which was originally unopposed was something like the ski lift that the Sierra Club had up above Clair Tappaan Lodge, just a minimal development that would handle at most maybe 3,500 people which is something different from a 35,000 a day [proposal].

Lage: I had asked you before we were on the tape about the conservation committee, and you started to mention how that related to the board.

Sherwin: I'm quite uncertain about my facts in this because as I became more and more preoccupied about the Mammoth Pass Road I probably was less and less a part of the conservation committee. But my impression is that it sort of gradually became pretty much absorbed in its function by the board itself. I think it was originally composed to relieve the board of some of the problems of the detailed work that it took to run a conservation program of the scope that the Sierra Club was getting into. It may have been partly the board was turning more and more towards a staff to assemble some of this data that they needed to formulate policy. I don't really know, and I'm not sure. I think maybe before we get completely away from this subject I should go back and talk to Randal Dickey about his recollections and refresh mine.

The Sierra Club had, in effect, no staff until about 1952, I think. Then it was a very meager one for some period of time consisting primarily of Dave Brower and one secretary.

Lage: So in your position on the conservation committee, you mainly became involved in Mammoth Pass Road rather than in the general functioning of the conservation committee?

Sherwin: Yes, quite.

Lage: That was a long-time commitment.

Sherwin: Yes. That was not the end of it, of course, since the next year we won so very narrowly, we were always apprehensive that there would come about a time when there would be more pressure for it than there was against it and that we'd have an unsympathetic legislature. However, meanwhile these various studies of the roadless areas in the United States have gone on. However ill you may think of the Forest Service's handling of both RARE I and RARE II, it does remain a fact that now we can feel reasonably certain that they won't be putting a road up in this area because even the Forest Service has recommended closing that corridor, adding a small bit of additional wilderness in that area.

Lage: When you mention Minaret Summit or Mammoth Pass, is it either/or or is that the same road?

Sherwin: No, they originally were talking in terms of a road across Mammoth Pass. But then the more they studied the terrain, the more they decided that instead of going on the south side of Mammoth Mountain over Mammoth Pass, they would go over the north side over Minaret Summit at about the same altitude.

Lage: It gets awfully high, doesn't it?

Sherwin: About 9,300; it's not as high as Tioga. I think it's not as high as Sonora. It's higher than Ebbets or Carson or Donner or Echo.

High Sierra Pack Trip With Justice Douglas, 1959

Lage: Did the 1959 pack trip to the Sierra with Justice William O. Douglas have something to do with this Mammoth Pass Road? How did that come about?

Sherwin: I think that the reason that we were lucky enough to be invited to go on this trip was because I had been involved in this Mammoth Pass controversy. Of course, the fact that Justice Douglas had recommended against building any more roads in this wilderness area had its effect on the public's opinion, but I think it had more effect on my activity in conservation.

Lage: Let's talk a little bit about that because it sounds like a good experience. In fact, we were just getting the Brower interview in its final stages and I happened to glance at one little section

Lage: there and he mentioned this trip. He said that the purpose of it was to build up opposition to the Mammoth Pass Road. That's the way he remembered it. Was that your feeling?

Sherwin: I didn't think, until you said that, that that was Douglas's primary purpose. He was gathering notes for his book My Wilderness and was obviously ready to lend his hand to any legitimate, worthy conservation project. The motives of the Sierra Club leaders--the president, Ed Wayburn, and the executive director, Dave Brower--would obviously have included the hope that this would lend some weight to the opposition to the Mammoth Pass Road. Does that answer the question?

Lage: Yes, I think it could have been an inaccurate memory on Brower's part or just a partial memory.

Sherwin: Well, people remember things in accordance with their own predilections, colored a little bit by how they like to remember it, too.

Lage: Tell us about the trip and the effect it had on you.

Sherwin: We met the party at Garnet Lake and then accompanied them from Garnet Lake to the McGee Creek Pack Station by way of the Muir Trail. It goes by way of Shadow Lake and then Rosalie, Cecile, and all those lakes along the bench and then down across the canyon near the Devil's Postpile and Reds Meadow and then back up and along the contour that eventually leads around to Duck Creek and then over the ridge that leads eventually to Purple Lake and then Virginia Lake and Horse Heaven and Tully Hole and finally out by way of McGee Pass.

Lage: The trip for Douglas was longer than this?

Sherwin: He started a little earlier. We met them about the third day out, I guess, or perhaps the second day. The thing that impressed me the most was the man's insatiable curiosity [and] how easy it was to get along with him. He was just a lot of fun and his attention to the minutest detail of wild country--He'd be riding along on a horse and then he'd see something under a rock or something and he would climb off his horse and get down on his knees and elbows and be looking at a tiny flower or looking up something in a book about something he had seen along the way.

My impressions that I had acquired before that trip were really sort of in gross. I had never really poked into all of the little details that composed the whole that I loved so much. But the way he looked at things changed my way of looking at things like that. So shortly after that, Janet and I enrolled in a course that UC Extension gave on the wildlife in the High Sierra. We went numerous

Sherwin: nights to lectures and then wound up with a week's field trip up at White Wolf in Yosemite. Ever after that we've been interested in all of the birds and flowers and animals and whatnot that you can see!

Lage: What about Douglas's conservation views? Did they come out in the trip or was it more an appreciative--

Sherwin: I would say the latter. Of course, as soon as we had had this exposure, then we fell to reading all of his works. It's kind of hard to remember but I think that we obtained more of an idea of his conservation views from reading the books than we did through just being with him on this trip because they were all conservationists on this trip.

Lage: Who else was on it?

Sherwin: Lewis Clark, Genny Schumacher Smith (she was then Genny Schumacher) with her husband, Jerry Schumacher, Dan Luten, Bob Golden, Phil Berry, young Ken Brower.

Lage: They must have been quite young at the time, Berry and Brower.

Sherwin: Yes. Phil was at Stanford. Brower was in high school, wasn't he? Who else?

Lage: Were the Wayburns on it?

Sherwin: They left the party at Garnet Lake at the same place we met the party. We just got there and they turned around and left. I don't think there was any connection! [laughter]

Lage: Was this a trip that the Sierra Club had organized and invited Douglas on or had Douglas expressed an interest in it?

Sherwin: I'm not sure.

Janet Sherwin: Well, I can tell you something. The trip was organized because Douglas wanted to see the Sierra. It was the only remaining wilderness area in the United States that he hadn't covered, and that's why the trip was organized--for him to do that. We were invited because you were a lawyer, and it was Genny who got us into the trip. Nobody else did, and Dave Brower was very angry. He didn't want us there at all. He was rude to me the whole blessed time. I don't think he ever even said a civil word. But that was why we were invited, not because you were a part of any conservation effort about anything. It was just because as Genny said that day when she came out and asked me, she said, "Jerry and I think that you and Ray ought to go on this trip because there won't be anybody

- Janet: else with whom Justice Douglas can talk his own language."
- Sherwin: But I had been involved in the Mammoth Pass Road thing before that.
- Janet: Oh, yes, but the Mammoth Pass Road had absolutely nothing to do in any way with the trip with Justice Douglas. It wasn't a consideration. This was '59, and you weren't all that involved in the Mammoth Pass Road thing yet. You got involved in it very heavily when we got back from this trip.
- Sherwin: Well, then I told you wrong because I thought I had been involved in it before as well.
- Lage: Did you find an opportunity to talk his own language with Justice Douglas?
- Janet: Oh, every night when we were having our little drinks before dinner they were talking about some case, this, that and the other thing.
[laughter]
- Sherwin: Yes, it was fun.
- Lage: Was it a really formative experience? Did this get you more motivated or lead to further involvement?
- Sherwin: Oh, I'm sure it did, I'm sure it did.
- Janet: When he came home he said, "If that man can do that, so can I!" So he started.
- Sherwin: Well, I didn't realize that it had such a direct impetus on my activity. ##

II SIERRA CLUB SCHISM AND RECONSTRUCTION, 1966-1970

[Interview 2: October 21, 1980]##

Nominating Committee Concerns, 1966-67

Lage: This is the second interview with Ray Sherwin on his career with the Sierra Club. We are going to talk today about the internal conflicts that came up during the 1960's, and I thought we'd start with your first apparent involvement or one of your early involvements in internal affairs--the nominating committee and the nominating and election procedures committee [NEPAC]. Do you remember how you happened to be chosen to chair the nominating committee or who made the choice?

Sherwin: I was appointed by Will Siri. Will was a very close friend of Charles (Chuck) Huestis. They had been associated together on the Everest expedition. Huestis was the treasurer, and Will was the deputy leader. I think that they had been associated in other expeditions as well. Chuck Huestis was a very active member of the nominations and elections procedure committee. I assume that he must have had a good word to say for me to Will. Then it happened that for some reason or other I got chosen to write an article for the Bulletin that in effect brought out some of the problems that had been discussed and tentatively resolved by the report of the NEPAC committee. That may or may not have been a factor. I just don't know.

Anyway, Will Siri was president and appointed me to chair the nominating committee in 1966. Then the following year George Marshall followed up and appointed me again.

Lage: Can you discuss some of the considerations that the committee took into account when they were choosing nominees, not necessarily the official ones. What kinds of discussions went on?

Sherwin: By and large, the reasons for choosing particular nominees was very

Sherwin: was very close to what the official reasons were. We were faced with a situation that we thought required a good deal of care. This was the period when the club had started its very, very rapid growth. One of the results of that was that we were getting into the Sierra Club a lot of young and very active members who wanted a voice in the running of the club and who had acquired a feeling that the members of the board of directors who had been on for quite a while represented some sort of an old guard that was self-perpetuating and that were resisting the further democratization of the club.

I don't think that was true. It's just the way things are, especially in view of the problem of communicating. The problem of communication has been a bete noir for the Sierra Club throughout its existence. How do you let the volunteer people of the club who are crucial to its effectiveness know the issues that the board faces, the considerations on all sides of such issues? How do you secure from them their opinions as to how those issues should be resolved? How do you give them a sense of participating in the club? So first of all, we wanted to have a board of directors that was representative of the entire Sierra Club and not just the people mostly from San Francisco and Los Angeles who had been the stalwarts of the club.

Secondly, there were problems involving some of the members of the board of directors who had become elected because of who they were. This included some very, very fine men, but it included some to whom it appeared to us that the Sierra Club was not their first love. They probably were of great value to the club in that it added prestige to its board. But on the other hand, it had the disadvantage that they contributed very, very little to the proceedings of the board especially with respect to critical, internal matters, such as the incipient problem of Dave Brower.

Lage: What type of people are you thinking of?

Sherwin: I'm talking about people like Eliot Porter; to a considerable extent, Luna Leopold, although I think maybe my committee nominated him; even William O. Douglas who was on briefly and became impatient with some of Bestor Robinson's ramblings and resigned.

Lage: So these were more the big names.

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: So that was one of the problems. I noticed that your committee did nominate John Oakes. Wasn't he in the category as well?

Sherwin: There was quite a discussion about whether or not he would fit in that category. First of all, the editorials that he had written in

Sherwin: the New York Times to us evidenced wide interests. He wasn't uninformed about a lot of the conservation problems that would be facing the board of directors. To the contrary, he was not only informed, but he was an articulate spokesman for his point of view. His job we didn't think would occupy him anymore than any the rest of us were preoccupied with our making a living, and we thought that he'd be different.

Other considerations we had were we thought that the presidency tended to stay in relatively few hands for too long, especially in the case of Ed Wayburn. Nothing against Ed, it was just that--we'll get into this later--but it was just that this tended to exclude people from participating in the decision-making processes.

So we wanted to have candidates as far as possible each of whom would have been capable of assuming the presidency. There was a little bit of confusion concerning some of these things because the NEPAC committee had recommended certain things that were not possible under the then existing bylaws, such as rotating directorships where you could have only a certain number of terms and then you would have to take a sabbatical in effect before you were eligible for re-election; such as the members of the nominating committee itself being selected partially by the Sierra Club Council, the Sierra Club Council being a truly representative body of the chapters and the groups. So all of that could not be done without bylaw amendments, but it was in the background of our considerations, too.

So I guess the goal that the nominating committee had was to get a board consisting of persons who were not only conscientious, reputable, experienced people in tackling conservation problems, but persons who would be willing to devote the time and energy to the internal affairs of the club and not just scorn some of these concerns of the members, people who were well qualified to be administrators in terms of internal affairs as well as meet the public and speak on behalf of the club for consumption by the public. I think that just about summarizes it.

Lage: Did you get any kinds of pressures or input from outside the nominating committee, such as from the staff or the board to choose certain people--or not to choose certain people.

Sherwin: I'm not sure exactly how to answer that because we solicited recommendations from everybody, not excluding the staff. One of the arguments that was presented to the NEPAC committee and which was offered as one of the reasons why NEPAC committee was first created was that the board was jealous of its identity, as well as its prerogatives, and would fight to keep its own members on it. None of this happened. The manner in which there came about the existence

Sherwin: of a particular pressure group emerged later with the CMC [Concerned Members for Conservation] and the ABC.*

Lage: But that didn't come into being as early as '66?

Sherwin: No.

Lage: I noticed that you put up the slate for '67 and Martin Litton wasn't on it. He was nominated by petition.

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: Was there a lot of discussion around that? Or did that have something to do with the beginning of a split in the club, a recognition of that?

Sherwin: I should modify what I said a moment ago a little bit. I guess it was in '67--I'm not sure--that a dispute arose over the action of the board in connection with the proposed nuclear power plant of PG&E at Diablo Canyon.

Lage: I think '67 was that first referendum . It was on that ballot.

Sherwin: Yes. The background of this was that the board was faced first with the proposal of PG&E to build its plant at the Nipomo Dunes, and the board felt that it couldn't altogether stop such power plants and that Diablo Canyon, being hidden to a considerable extent, was a far better place for this than the Nipomo Dunes, the Nipomo Dunes being quite an attractive place both visually and for its botanical array.

So the board had adopted this as a policy which Dave Brower and certain of his supporters, such as Martin Litton and Fred Eissler, could not agree [with]. The result was that Dave and those who supported him set about getting this petition. There are several nuances to this. One was that they had so worded the petition as to make it appear as if the board of directors had espoused the establishment of this nuclear plant as if there were no background of dealing with the practical consideration. So the board took it upon itself to use its authority (change the wording of the ballot measures). This was very offensive to the people proposing this referendum originally.

Lage: Did that seem like a fair way of dealing with it to you as a judge?

*In 1968, ABC was an acronym for Aggressive Brower Conservation. In 1969 it became the Committee for an Active, Bold, Constructive Sierra Club.--ed.

Sherwin: Oh, yes, particularly as a judge. There was a lot of unpleasantness involved in this, and it raised a problem which I'm not sure was ever explicitly solved although it gradually faded away as time and personnel changed. The issue was this. The function of the board is to decide the policy of the club. The staff is expected to advise the board, to propose policy, whatever. But once policy is decided then one would think that loyalty and ethics would require that the staff carry out the policy of the board as far as they can. In this referendum bit there was a good deal of question as to whether that standard of ethics--and that's my viewpoint--were in fact being violated rather obnoxiously in that Brower, the executive director, the one supposedly in a position to set an example for the rest of the staff and to counsel the staff, was the leader of the group that was trying to sabotage the board's policy, or trying to make a different policy. So there is a connection between this and the campaign of Litton to get back on by petition instead of by nomination from the nominating committee.

Lage: Was there a connection between this and somebody's decision not to renominate Litton?

Sherwin: Not really.

Lage: Because usually incumbents were renominated.

Sherwin: I can't say there wasn't any connection, but there were more important considerations as far as Martin was concerned. Martin was a very bright man and a very likeable guy. In fact, I am very, very fond of him personally, and so is my wife. But as a fellow member of the board of directors he is very, very difficult. He is the first person in Sierra Club history to indulge in name-calling--personal affronts in board meetings--and the first to advance that kind of thing as an argument in favor of whatever. That, together with the fact that he was never reconciled to the idea that the board was supposed to run the club and not Dave Brower, I think were the primary factors. I think this other was more incidental. Of course, it added fire.

Lage: Do you ever see Martin Litton now just by way of an aside? I'm trying to get hold of him to interview him, and he hasn't replied to a couple of letters.

Sherwin: I haven't seen him for quite a while. The last time I heard of him was in connection with this episode that happened a few months ago when there was a small private plane that got in the way of a jet coming into the Oakland Airport and then afterwards we learned that it was Martin Litton! [laughs] Janet and I had to laugh because that's Martin! She has flown with him, incidentally, when he had the Sunset plane. She and a friend of hers and some others got an overhead view very close to where we were working on this Minaret Summit

Sherwin: Road. She enjoyed that immensely.

Janet: What?

Sherwin: The flight with Martin Litton.

Janet: Oh! [laughter] The closest call I've ever had in my life.

Sherwin: There was also (I guess it was in '67) something that was more or less connected with this. I guess all of these things were connected together. It's a question of unraveling them.

There was a movement to nominate Dave Brower for the board of directors. Theretofore I don't think there had been much thought given to the question of whether a member of the staff ought to be on the board of directors or not. I think it was just sort of assumed that such would not be the case. But it has to be thought of in terms of the context, too. The Sierra Club existed for at least its first sixty years with almost no paid staff and at most a part-time secretary. It wasn't until 1952 that Dave was made executive director. So there hadn't been any custom, practice--

Lage: He had been a member of the board.

Sherwin: He had been a member of the board at the time, and I think that it was understood that he would go off the board of directors when he became executive director, but I don't know that it was either explicitly or implicitly part of the deal--probably, but I don't know.

In any event, certainly by 1966 or 1967 it was generally assumed that it would be inappropriate for any member of the staff to be in any policy-making job. So it was proposed by petition that he be nominated for the board of directors--you better put that in quotation marks for this reason. First of all, even then there had to be a certain number of signatures on the petition to make it valid. Secondly, we had a new situation arising in that we were going into mechanical methods of counting ballots, just because it took such an inordinately long time to count them by hand. But it was entirely experimental at this time. But in order to make it mechanically possible, we had to have a cutoff date for the petitions that was earlier than usual.

So it came about that when Dave's petition was filed by Fred Eissler the part that I got was possessed of not nearly enough signatures. Part of those signatures of the Xerox copy that I got were illegible, and it just did not qualify. Momentarily I expected a big fuss, but it didn't happen. It just sort of faded, and so did his candidacy. There were candidates by petition. One of them was Martin Litton and I've forgotten who the other one was--Dan Luten

Sherwin: maybe.

Lage: As early as the '67 election, were you viewing the club or the board of directors as having two opposing sides?

Sherwin: It was becoming factionalized even so early.

Lage: Did you in the nominating committee make any attempt to sort of balance [things], to choose people from each side?

Sherwin: No, I think maybe we were a little obtuse and didn't fully recognize all of the flags that were flying.

Lage: So you were just looking for the best--

Sherwin: We did not attempt to balance factions at all.

Lage: Is there anything else that occurred that would be important to tell?

Sherwin: Only this, that as time has gone on, some of the things that were recommended by the NEPAC committee have in fact become club law through the bylaws, such as the choice of a part of the members of the nominating committee by the Sierra Club Council; such as the rotating directorships so that a person can stay on only two consecutive terms before he goes off for a year.

Lage: Do you think that the limiting of director's terms has been beneficial to the club?

Sherwin: I think that it probably was essential in order to obtain a reasonably good geographical representation on the board of directors because people who have done so much for the club--the Will Siris, the Ed Wayburns, the Ansel Adams and others of their caliber--could keep on getting elected forever should they choose to do so. Most of them don't but should they so choose they could. The fact that they had to go off the board left at least one space for somebody from some place else.

We still have the problem of people getting elected who don't really possess all of the qualifications that we would like to see in board members, that problem being a little bit exacerbated by the fact that we have people closing in on certain candidates for the purpose of getting them on the board because they live in a certain geographical area, so that the other qualities maybe are not examined as well as they should be.

Lage: So the regional aspect takes precedence.

Sherwin: I see a little bit of that, but by and large it has probably been beneficial to the club to have this continual infusion of new blood.

1978 Nominating Committee--a Comparison

Lage: You were on the nominating committee again in '78-'79--and chaired it again, didn't you?

Sherwin: Yes, I was on it [in 1977] and then I chaired it [in 1978].

Lage: Was that a different sort of experience? Were the concerns still the same?

Sherwin: The concerns were a little bit different in that by the time I was on again the matter of ERA was very important.

Lage: Important to the nominating committee?

Sherwin: Important to two very energetic members of the nominating committee--Betsy Barnett and Diane Meyer.

Lage: Tell me a little about that. It's off the track but it sounds intriguing. How did that figure in?

Sherwin: I'm to a certain extent sympathetic with the effort to get qualified women in a policy-making position for the club. I've supported several. Long before this was a real hot issue and much to my present dismay, I was a strong supporter of Claire Dedrick when she was a candidate for the board.

Lage: Were you supporting her in part because she was a woman? Did you think it was important to have women represented?

Sherwin: I suppose so, yes. The same was true with Helen Burke. When it came to nominations I supported her very strongly. The same is true with Ellen Winchester.

Lage: You mentioned that the ERA had a strong effect on the nominating committee in '78-'79. Do you mean the ERA specifically?

Sherwin: Of course, I am using the term ERA pretty loosely, I mean the idea of getting women on the board of directors.

Lage: Because I think the ERA issue itself became a bit of a controversy. You were saying that the two women members of the nominating committee

Lage: in 1978 were interested in getting more women.

Sherwin: Ye, especially Betsy. We had a lot of names to consider and by this time the club is so big that the individual members of the nominating committee often did not include people who were well acquainted with very able people who were proposed by others. It was a question of our dealing with strangers. How do we appraise their abilities?

So when we'd be considering various people and maybe during the proceedings of the committee somebody would say, "Gee, there ought to be some woman who has those qualifications." We'd listen, and in two or three cases I would say that the fact that it was a woman who had the necessary qualifications affected our conclusions--for example, Ann Duff. Now, she had a good background as a member of the national executive committee of the League of Women Voters. She was a very personable, articulate person. We were told that she had done good work in her area, but we didn't know. But I think the fact that she had been on the national executive committee of the League of Women Voters was very much a factor in her becoming the unanimous nominee of the committee.

Lage: How do you proceed to find out about people now that you don't know them? Do you get letters of recommendations from, say the League of Women Voters? Do you interview people at all?

Sherwin: In a crude sort of a way, when I was first chairman of the nominating committee, we composed a series of a few questions to ask potential nominees. This was greatly expanded and made much more inclusive in the questionnaire that we prepared to send out to candidates in 1978. I might say that on the basis of the answers to those questionnaires, certain people that I can recall vividly were simply erased. ##

Lage: So on the basis of some of the answers to the questions you immediately stopped considering some people. Was that based at all on ideological points of view?

Sherwin: No, just ineptitude, clumsiness.

Lage: They just didn't seem capable?

Sherwin: They just didn't know how to write or evidenced a very confused state of mind.

Lage: Are there problems ideologically on the nominating committee? Is that discussed? Does it try to balance views or do people try to put forward their own point of view? I'm thinking of wilderness versus urban issues or other things that people might disagree on?

Sherwin: If the ideological aspect creeps in, it's pretty subtle. I don't think that we asked this kind of thing in 1966, but we did ask in 1978 in the questionnaire, what they considered the most important issues facing the club and their ideas as to any practical solutions to them. So to that extent ideology does enter in.

Lage: But what about the deliberations of the committee?

Sherwin: If a person puts forth his viewpoint rationally and articulately, if it was one with which any member of the nominating committee disagreed, I do not think it would affect the result. Let me go back to 1966 and '67. I've already hinted at the problem of communications and one aspect of the problem of communication was how do you let the electorate know what kind of a person they're voting for because most of them don't know them.

We wrestled around with the problem of preparing election brochures quite extensively. We talked in terms of getting the candidates themselves to write the statements, but some of the people on the committee felt that that would be too much like electioneering, which always seemed a little bit unbecoming to the Sierra Club. We talked about various ways of trying to correct this. We wound up with getting statements from the candidates and then having them rewritten by a professional journalist. I selected the person because I knew how well qualified she was. Her name then was Mildred Schroeder. She is now Mildred Hamilton and writes feature pages for the Examiner. She wrote the brochures for us in the first year. Then the second year ('67) I think Stewart Ogilvy, who worked for Fortune Magazine, did them.

Lage: He was a member of your nominating committee?

Sherwin: He was a member of the committee, but he had no axe to grind.

Lage: Where should we move from here? I noticed something I had not put on your list was that you chaired an Information and Education Conference in '68. Do you remember that?

Sherwin: Yes, that's when I became acquainted with Claire Dedrick. I don't remember a great deal about it. I know it was in the Loma Prieta chapter, and I know that we had a very interesting conference, and I was very happy with the result of it and made some acquaintances that I have enjoyed ever since.

Lage: Was that the conference where Dick Sill made some rather strong accusations?

Sherwin: I don't know. I don't remember that--about what?

Lage: About the situation in the club and Dave Brower?

Sherwin: It could well have been because by that time the problem was seething.

Lage: That doesn't stand out in your mind?

Sherwin: No, actually I guess I was most impressed with Claire's talk there about a particular throughfare in San Mateo County that they had saved from commercialization and which interested me in her as a potential board candidate. But I was no longer on the nominating committee.

The Emerging Opposition to Dave Brower

Lage: It sounds as if you got sort of an inside view of the club and the operations of the board through these experiences in the late sixties.

Sherwin: Yes, to a certain extent.

Lage: What was your impression at the time? Can you recall how you looked at the club's problems?

Sherwin: I think that one should acknowledge that even a judge is not entirely objective and that you cannot help but be affected by personal relationships and past experiences, that one does have predilections. I've always been very much of a liberal in terms of a democratic form of government, and I've always been personally rather strict in my viewpoint towards ethical operations--honesty. That's an unfortunate word because I think the other side thinks that they're operating entirely ethically and honestly, too. Anyway, my first personal contact with Dave Brower had been when Janet and I were invited through the intercession of Genny Schumacher on the Douglas expedition over the Sierra.

Dave was a pretty arrogant fellow by this time--impatient with lesser mortals--and he was positively rude to Janet and me, not actively but passively.

Lage: This was in '59?

Sherwin: This was in 1959. So my personal attitude towards Dave, much as I admired his charisma and his talent as an editor and artist, was somewhat negative. By 1967 we were getting reports from the treasurer of the club--and Will Siri was treasurer at that time after he had been president the year before--about the deplorable financial

Sherwin: condition of the club and the unpredictability of its future operations because of things that Dave had done. Because of the fact that I knew Will pretty well by that time and was satisfied as to his rectitude, I believed what was said about Dave, and the evidence was there. He had made all kinds of commitments for the club without authority from the board. He would sometimes do things that were inconsistent with club policy, as in Diablo Canyon. He disobeyed standing orders as far as the advertisement in the New York Times is concerned.

It had certainly been the general policy of the club that it was bad business to try to gain a point by denigrating somebody else. He attacked Newton Drury in that New York Times advertisement as--

Lage: We're talking about the redwoods ad. Do you feel that that was Dave or Edgar Wayburn that was responsible? Edgar Wayburn was the task force leader for the redwoods.

Sherwin: Yes, but it was Dave, and Ed just let it ride. He didn't prevent it or didn't do anything to correct it. I don't know even that he knew anything about it before it happened.

Lage: Did you go to the board meetings during the late sixties?

Sherwin: Rarely; I went to look and observe occasionally.

Lage: So most of your information came from what?

Sherwin: You will notice that there is on file the treasurer's report that I refer to and, of course, I heard of it by word of mouth from Dick Sill. I couldn't tell you who else. Will Siri verbally tended to be very close mouthed so that he wouldn't have been talking about it. But if you went to the board meeting and associated with any of these people it would get to you. The most vocal was Dick Sill. But other members of the Sierra Club Council were pretty upset about it, too. I can think of Alan Carlin, Dick Searle.

Lage: When you say upset about it, what did their opposition seem to be based on primarily?

Sherwin: The concern that the club would go bankrupt as well as the evident insubordination. Dave had by this time become quite obsessed with power. Wallace Stegner during the later campaign capsulized it neatly when he said that Dave had been bitten by the worm of power. I don't know whether you have run across that quotation or not.

Lage: I did. In fact, I heard of it, but I actually read it in your papers in a copy of that letter to the editor. Stegner had been a former supporter of Dave's.

Sherwin: Well, everybody had--Ansel Adams, Dick Leonard. Dick was grievously hurt by the necessity, as he saw it, of doing something about Dave in the club because there had been a time in Dave's life when he was almost like a foster son to Dick Leonard. Dick had taught him to climb when Dave was a fifteen year old boy. They had spent a lot of time together. They had worked very closely together.

They had worked together even on such things as the establishment of the Sierra Club Foundation. It was a mutual thing. The aggressiveness of the club at this time sort of wrote on the wall that the IRS would be down their necks sometime, so Dick established the Sierra Club Foundation. I'm sure Dave contributed to that. They had worked together on lots and lots of things. Well, where were we?

Lage: We were talking about the developing schisms. You mentioned Dick Sill. Would you have more to say about his role in working towards the ouster of Brower? Do you think it was an important role?

Sherwin: Oh, very. Dick, I think, had more to do than anybody else with the establishing of the Sierra Club Council as the grassroots organization of the club, the really democratic feature of the club. Dick wielded a great deal of influence with the Sierra Club Council as its chairman and as a person who had an infinite amount of energy, a stubbornness in persisting and pursuing facts and disseminating them, and a very acute interest in the internal affairs of the club. He wrote extensively, distributed what he had to say to everybody, and became the needle--the Ralph Nader--of the Sierra Club and its internal workings.

Dick is also very eccentric. He acknowledges this. In my opinion he became afflicted with something that was characteristic of the campuses in the 1960s, namely a compulsion to bring power down wherever it lay. First, it was Dave Brower. Later it turned to the presidency of the club. Dick never was able to accept the notion that if you are going to do something, somebody's got to do it, and you can't just push it away on the assumption that that's the democratic way.

Lage: Participatory democracy was a big word in those days. Was that something he talked about?

Sherwin: Oh, yes, and to that extent I was with him a hundred percent. But then it only dawned on me later that he couldn't accept the corollary that the authority to execute the policy of the club had to rest somewhere.

Lage: Would he have preferred more regionalization?

Sherwin: It wasn't just that. It was just the idea of sharing the powers of

Sherwin: the presidency or wherever else the seat of power was with everybody else on the board of directors, and everybody else as far as that's concerned. He proposed some rather bizarre schemes for effecting it that nobody could see--

Lage: Are we talking now about the time during your presidency?

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: That's interesting, the connection you made between his attitude toward Brower and then later.

Sherwin: We have to recognize that the desire for power affected a lot of people and was implicit in this struggle. I think that the struggle and what happened with the CMC [Concerned Members for Conservation] is a hundred percent justified by the rationale that the Sierra Club Board of Directors has by its articles of incorporation and bylaws the responsibility for making policy and seeing that it is properly implemented and that the people they hire to carry out functions are necessarily subordinate to the wishes of the board of directors and various officers of the board of directors have been tempted by and have enjoyed the use of power, too, including myself.

Certainly, it is illustrated by the actions and conduct of Ed Wayburn probably more than any other officer that the club has had, although other persons would contradict that and point to the Phil Berry episode as being another one. But Ed Wayburn persistently has sought authority through the Sierra Club and later through the Sierra Club Foundation. He clutches it, doesn't want to share it, plays it very close to his chest, and resents it very much if somebody challenges it.

For example, I've forgotten how many terms either consecutively or intermittently he had been president at the time that the CMC was successful at electing its slate including me in 1969.

Lage: It had been five years with a three-year break, I believe.

Sherwin: Anyway, I'll never forget a meeting we had at Dick Leonard's house after the election [1969]. As is customary, [there was] a discussion among the newly elected board unofficially and not out in the public as to what they were going to do about officers.

Lage: Did it include the whole board or the CMC faction and its supporters?

Sherwin: It included all of the CMC people. It also included some people who were not on the board that were sponsors of the CMC. It included Phil Berry who had not really been a CMC person, Will Siri, I'm not sure who all.

Lage: But it was a caucus of those who supported the CMC?

Sherwin: Yes, and various persons were proposed as president. To show what I then thought of Dick Sill, I was arguing for him almost alone.

Lage: Was he there?

Sherwin: I don't think he was. He lived in Reno. I don't think he was there. So everything was all argued out, and there seemed to be pretty much approaching a heavy majority for Phil Berry as president when Ed started speaking up. He went around to each of us individually and wanted to know why we did not support him for president. I was the only one that told him.

Lage: How did you manage that?

Sherwin: I told him that I thought that he had been responsible for exacerbating the factionalism and for failure to do something about Dave when Dave's insubordination first was patent, and that I thought the club would suffer if this kind of pussyfooting continued, and that I thought that Phil Berry was a dynamic young man who could turn the corner and put the Sierra Club on the path to a different kind of future.

Lage: Did others agree with you but just didn't speak up?

Sherwin: Typical! [laughter]

We have sort of skipped a bit because a good deal went on between the first emergence of the Dave Brower problem in public, the formation of groups of his supporters and groups of his detractors, and the organization of the CMC. To back up, the strong people behind that were, number one, Dick Leonard. The person whose prestige and by this time rather voluminous communications contributed a great deal towards its success was Ansel Adams. Dick Sill was also undoubtedly responsible for the word getting around, especially in southern California through his friends on the Sierra Club Council. All of us worked. Each of us had his own group of friends and people who were very much interested in the Sierra Club but quite ignorant of its internal workings. I had lots of inquiries from people who were acquainted with me through the nominating committee and just through personal association.

Concerned Members For Conservation and the 1969 Election Campaign

Lage: How early was the CMC organized? Was it a response to the election

Lage: of '68 when a lot of pro-Brower people were elected?

Sherwin: I would say late 1968--very late 1968--and early 1969. I really think that it didn't come to a head until early '69.

Lage: Do you recall how you were chosen to run that year as part of the slate?

Sherwin: I had run the year before, and I hadn't done too badly, but I wasn't elected.

Lage: Was this the nominating committee that put you forth?

Sherwin: No, I would think it really came more outside the nominating committee and somehow got to the nominating committee. I don't even remember who was on the nominating committee at that time. I think basically it was Dick Leonard's organization that led to an inquiry among potentially successful candidates as to who was for sure sympathetic with the viewpoints that they entertained. There were certain people who were very much exercised by what had been going on too. These include Raffi Bedayn, Tom Jukes.

Lage: They were involved in organizing the CMC.

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: What about funding? The campaign materials were really slick. The club had seen nothing like that before or since.

Sherwin: Yes. I don't remember exactly how that was handled. I think I coughed up a little bit, but I think that efforts were made to secure funding from a wide variety of sources--no, I shouldn't say that--from a great number of people. I didn't have anything I guess to do with that except to maybe cough up a check or two. Essential question. Better ask Dick Leonard.

Lage: There are rumors, of course, as always, that PG&E was helping out and things like that. Would your experience verify anything like that?

Sherwin: I would say that's absurd. PG&E had absolutely no influence on the decisions of the board of directors with respect to conservation matters except as to the fact that PG&E existed, that PG&E was a powerful public utility, that it wouldn't lie down and take what the Sierra Club said without a battle and that was because of its money and widespread stock ownership was a tough foe. But PG&E had absolutely nothing to do ever outside of what I've just mentioned with the internal workings of the Sierra Club.

Sherwin: In fact, the PG&E eschewed that sort of thing in my experience as president--on an entirely unrelated matter. Although there were certain members of the officer corps of the PG&E who were somewhat sympathetic to conservation such as Shermer Sibley, the former president, they would back off and be most meticulous about dealing at arms length with the Sierra Club as an entity.

So this rumor that you are talking about is just plain nonsense; someone's paranoia. [laughs]

Lage: Was there a lot of talk about whether Wayburn would be included on the slate? Eventually he was endorsed by the CMC, was he not? The campaign literature did come out with four members plus Wayburn. Do you remember anything about that?

Sherwin: I had forgotten about that. He was certainly not involved in the middle. In fact, there was a great deal of annoyance with Ed that I have already manifested because of the pussyfooting that he did when he was president and when Dave was being particularly arrogant and indifferent towards the wishes of the board. You are aware of this business about the contract all of a sudden showing up giving Dave royalties on a book that he had edited. Nobody knew anything about that and everybody was horrified. That, among other things, was thought to be quite sufficient to tip the scales so Ed should have fired him. Well, nothing of the kind.

Lage: Did people lobby with Wayburn?

Sherwin: I'm sure they tried to talk with him, and as a result, I think that he did write some letters that purported to lay down certain standards of conduct for Dave.

Lage: What was his explanation for the fact that he didn't act too strongly?

Sherwin: I don't recall that I ever heard him make an explanation. I think that he thought that he could avoid a complete split in the club if he acted very, shall I say, very diffidently?

Lage: Was this tied at all to what you said about his own personal desire for power, do you think?

Sherwin: I think so, I think so. If he could avoid the boats being rocked too much then maybe he would be president again. ##

I think Ed was emotionally adverse to the kind of internal organization and operations that Dick Sill espoused. Whenever Ed is a chairman of a committee or a task force or whenever he undertakes a project--and God knows he's done an immense amount of extremely

Sherwin: valuable conservation work--he does keep things to himself. He does not share. He does not consult with very many people. Possibly it's because he just simply doesn't have time to do things that way. He, after all, maintains a medical practice as well as all of the things he does for conservation, and he was at some time a president of the California Medical Association, too.

Lage: It is amazing, isn't it? So his own style would not lend itself to the kind of thing Dick Sill was thinking of--the sharing of power.

Sherwin: Correct.

Lage: Anything else we need talk about the CMC? Did you go around and campaign at different chapter meetings?

Sherwin: No.

Lage: That wasn't part of the campaign?

Sherwin: Wait a minute, maybe I better take that back. [pause] I do have a very vague recollection of having talked with some club chapter leaders about it. My recollection is indeed vague, but I think what happened was that in 1968 a group of us went to Nepal with Will Sirl, and I had accumulated a very attractive group of slides. When invited, I took great pleasure in showing these slides. Sometimes you get involved in conversations with people about the club's internal affairs before or after a slide presentation. I guess to that extent I did talk with people about the CMC, and about the problems, and about what we hoped to accomplish.

Lage: But you didn't electioneer by going and giving talks and being involved in debates in a formal sort of way?

Sherwin: No, not that way. Afterwards, I guess, because after it happened there was a great deal of concern all over the country about the club's internal problems.

Lage: After the election itself?

Sherwin: Yes, right.

Lage: Maybe we should move on to the post-Brower era unless there is something else you want to add.

Sherwin: I want to add just a little bit. As the campaign between the Dave Brower faction and the CMC evolved, the staff did become involved to the extent that they participated in supporting the ABC, which consisted of people who were as we thought of them then lackies of

Sherwin: of Dave Brower--Larry Moss, my successor as president, and some of the others. I was personally offended by the staff's activity. I thought it was out of line. I did not think it was a part of their appropriate function. They, of course, responded, "We are members of the club. We are entitled to participate as much as anybody else." What are you supposed to do, muzzle them?

Lage: Which staff members were involved in that?

Sherwin: I think the little coterie in the publications department that Dave gathered unto himself, including Hugh Nash and Bob Golden, and Jack Schanhaar. Of course, Bob wasn't publications. He was a botanist.

Lage: What about Mike McCloskey throughout this? How did he ride it out?

Sherwin: He, as far as I know, assiduously avoided becoming involved--very wisely.

Lage: So there was no criticism of his action in this?

Sherwin: I know of none; not at that time. I cannot recall anyone ever criticizing Mike's conduct during that affair.

Let me just make a personal aside as an aftermath of this that was kind of fun. One of Dave's strongest supporters was a professor of physics by the name of [Donald] Aitken, who was at the time I think at Stanford and later became head of the Department of Environmental Sciences at San Jose State University. Although a lot of people never got over their bitterness about it, most people did. One of our most pleasurable experiences was one time when Janet and I were, I think, on our way back from the Arctic and staying in a place in Fairbanks, Alaska, called the Northward Building. We had learned that Aitken was in town, so we invited him to come up to the apartment, and we got thoroughly drunk that night together and enjoyed our evening most immensely! [laughter] Buried all known hatchets! This kind of thing happened.

Ideological Divisions in the 1969 Schism

Lage: Do you think there was an ideological basis for some of the opposition? For instance, you mentioned Tom Jukes. Now, he certainly was poles apart not just about club finances, but he would oppose Brower for many of the stands he had taken.

Sherwin: Would he?

Lage: From what I know of him he is quite a supporter of the use of pesticides.

Sherwin: That's right, he was, wasn't he? We weren't into that at that time. The pesticide business was later.

Lage: It had come up.

Sherwin: Had it?

Lage: Yes, there had been a disagreement over pesticides in the sixties.

Sherwin: I really wasn't aware of it.

Lage: So as far as you were concerned it was financial and the question of authority?

Sherwin: I know there was a great deal of argument to the effect that Dave represented the aggressive conservation viewpoint, and that the rest of us were stick-in-the-muds. Personally I thought that was not true. It may have been seemingly true because of the fact that Dave was a charismatic, vivid character who had all the talent in the world to express aggressive conservation well, talents which most of the rest of us don't enjoy. But as far as being agreed or disagreed upon conservation policy, I didn't see it then and I don't see it now. There may have been an element that is close to that in that some of us would not stick out until the last dog was buried if we could obtain what we thought was the best realizable approach to our goal through a little compromise. You could cite many examples of this kind of thing, and I guess the Diablo Canyon controversy represents this to a certain extent. When you get to the point of my presidency I can tell you about an episode which exemplifies my point of view.

So many people interpreted this as a lack of complete dedication to conservation on the part of people in the CMC faction. I don't see it that way. Ideologically I don't recall that any of the CMC were at odds with Dave on conservation matters. Of course, the exception that you point out and one which I hadn't thought about was the possibility of the pesticide bit and Tom Jukes. I don't know.

Lage: It did seem like the media interpreted the victory of the CMC as sort of a pulling away or pulling back from conservation issues.

Sherwin: David was a very fond object of the media because he was colorful and made good copy, so they loved him. Up until the time of this happening, for example, several reporters covered the Sierra Club meetings, which they didn't do afterwards.

The Immediate Aftermath, 1969-70: Matters of Survival

- Lage: Did this interpretation affect the board? I'm talking now about the new board that took over in '69. Was this a concern to reassure the public or the club itself that matters would be pursued aggressively?
- Sherwin: I suppose sub rosa, but you see by the time that the new board took over in May of 1969 we were already for a major step in terms of the objectives and commitments of the Sierra Club. Phil Berry as president articulated the new goals under the general term of "matters of survival." It had to do with setting out the confrontation with pollution, urban problems, population, the ravaging of natural resources, under that caption.
- Lage: Were the "matters of survival" supported by the entire CMC ticket?
- Sherwin: We didn't talk very much about that at that time, no. I would say that it came about after the election.
- Lage: Was there any discussion of it or opposition on the board to these new goals for the club?
- Sherwin: Oh, indeed, very much so. I would say that Ed Wayburn was the most vociferous representative of the opposing point of view that we should stick with our traditional, classic conservation questions and not fritter away our time, energy and resources on matters of which we might not have the greatest competence. We were still obviously afflicted with money problems at that time. I can remember Ed arguing against our embarking on it. I can't pinpoint who else--
- Lage: I think Martin Litton spoke up against it at one of the meetings that I read the minutes of.
- Sherwin: It could be. Of course, Martin was never interested in anything except specific conservation problems. It is sort of funny. It always presented an agenda problem because it didn't matter what the agenda was. Martin would always somehow or other contrive to make a speech about, oh, say the desert pup fish or Mineral King--I've forgotten what other of his favorite projects were. So eventually when I began to pay more attention to comprising the agenda I always included one item that I knew to be Martin's pet at the moment so that he would have the opportunity to talk about that and hopefully not interrupt other matters quite so much in talking about his project.
- Lage: [laughs] That was very clever!

Sherwin: Well, I'm not sure that it was very successful! It was kind of a joke. [chuckles]

Lage: Was this [matters of survival] then a conscious turn towards a new direction? Was it Phil Berry's conception?

Sherwin: No, I don't think you could say that because I'm sure that Will Siri had been conscious of it for some time and perhaps others. Those are the two I can remember most. I would guess that maybe Will and Phil had talked about it quite a bit. Phil would be the one to tell you where he finally synthesized his concepts and--

Lage: Did the staff have some input in that area too?

Sherwin: I think so; very likely. I think probably Mike may very well have had something to do with it.

Rebuilding the Club Organization

Lage: Okay, so we've talked about choosing the new officers of the CMC or at least choosing Berry as president.

Sherwin: The rest of the slate was discussed beforehand. It turned out that-- I know that I was elected secretary. Edgar Wayburn was vice-president. Then August Frugè, fifth officer, and Sill as fourth officer.

Lage: Then Chuck Huestis was brought in as treasurer.

Sherwin: But not as a member of the executive committee, right. That's correct. That was all done in that caucus, and in effect was rammed down the throat of the other people on the board which had a certain amount of unfortunate consequences, but I suppose they were inevitable anyway. Prior to that time it had been sort of an unspoken law that the president was able to choose the members of the executive committee. But that was certainly no longer true after 1969.

Lage: What was the feeling at the initial meetings?

Sherwin: A lot of emotion involved. Some people in the middle kind of got stepped on, too, and that was most unfortunate.

Lage: What are you referring to there?

Sherwin: [pause] I'm thinking of Paul Brooks who became a candidate for secretary in 1969. I think he was nominated by the opposing faction not because they were particularly married to Paul but because of the fact that [they were for] anything to frustrate the CMC adherents. So he and I were thrown into conflict that way which extended into the

Sherwin: following year and even into the time of my presidency. Paul was a fine man.

Lage: Do you mean it created a personal conflict?

Sherwin: It has never been overt, but I have a feeling that he was hurt, and I don't blame him. He felt he was being sort of railroaded aside because of the fact that he wasn't personally involved out here on the West Coast.

Lage: So the CMC was not interested in forging a new unity after that election it sounds like. It sounds like they would take advantage of the victory.

Sherwin: They became interested in it, but they wanted to get certain essential things done before they got interested in reuniting the diverse elements of the club. The first was to secure the power in the board of directors, not in the executive director. But even that was not really finally resolved at that first organization meeting. I remember after Dave's resignation was accepted and then the consideration was who would be the successor. Mike [McCloskey] was the obvious candidate--what would his function be and what would his title be? I remember that Paul suggested something that I thought was very cogent and that I have ever since blamed myself for not following up on and supporting him and that was the idea that instead of having an executive director succeed Dave that we should have a chief of staff. The implication is that the primary function of the top staff member would be to support the volunteer committee chairmen and president, et cetera, not to be an independent operating executive officer. We should have gone that route, I think.

Lage: You are just referring to the volunteers. What about running the staff of the Sierra Club?

Sherwin: I'm not certain I follow you.

Lage: When you describe this job, you only described it in relation to volunteer committees and the volunteer board. Who would be responsible for the Sierra Club staff?

Sherwin: Oh, he would have to be the administrative officer as far as the workings of the staff were concerned. But it wouldn't be anything like we have experienced. It would be more or less like the executive officer of a chamber of commerce or something like that where it would be their function to support the committees, furnish staff support for the committees and task forces.

Lage: Do you think the club would have accomplished as much under that structure?

- Sherwin: I think we would have done better. Part of it is because of personalities. Part of it is because of the lack of coordination of the various arms of the club. Part of it is the failure to take as much advantage as we could of the extraordinary talent that could be available to the Sierra Club.
- Lage: Through the volunteers?
- Sherwin: Through the volunteers. Incidentally, in this connection I goofed horribly in my term for not doing something about it. I'm not sure how far I would have gotten.
- Lage: Shall we hold that off?
- Sherwin: I think so.
- Lage: Could you describe in more detail how the volunteer staff relationship at the highest level was worked out during the first two years before you were president. Eventually, after a lot of discussion, McCloskey was made executive director.
- Sherwin: Yes, he was. At that time, I thought that he and Phil got along very well, and it wasn't until near the end of Phil's second term that the dispute arose over the internal organization of the club. Now, I do not really know what their intimate relationship was but I think they worked very, very closely with respect to legal problems. Phil was developing with Fred Fisher and Don Harris the legal arm of the club, and Mike was a lawyer and consequently familiar not only with the details of conservation problems and becoming more and more interested in the legislative process, but capable also of apt consultation with respect to lawsuits.
- Lage: It seems from the minutes that whenever discussion is brought up about this relationship between the volunteer and the staff, or what Mike's job should be, someone always pops up with the "reorganization committee report is coming out and we should hold this for that committee report."
- Sherwin: Yes. I didn't go back and review the minutes, so you are one up on me there.
- Lage: When the committee report came out it didn't look as if it was terribly different from earlier discussions.
- Sherwin: That's right.
- Lage: You were not on that reorganization committee?
- Sherwin: No, I was not. I wasn't very happy with the report, although I don't think I ever said much about it as I recall.

Lage: I think we need to build a better picture of what happened during those two years so we can understand better the big conflict in '71.

Sherwin: Okay, I guess maybe the first critical thing that happened was the matter of personnel and trying to do something about the shambles into which the financial affairs of the club had fallen. Personalities inevitably come in here. Nobody thought then and nobody as far as I know has ever changed their mind very much that Mike had a great many talents as an administrator, and we also were confronted with the problem of editing the books and the Bulletin, the problem of keeping track of the membership. So we were fishing around everywhere for some kinds of solutions to these problems. There was the unpleasant element of certain of Dave's adherents still being around. I suppose some of them were justly confused.

Lage: Is this on the staff?

Sherwin: On the staff; doubts on the part of some of us as to their loyalty to the club as distinguished from their loyalty to Dave, justified in some cases I think, not justified in others. Real tragedies. So I think all of these problems were sort of put in limbo until the report of the reorganization committee was submitted. I just don't have an accurate recollection. I know that certain interim things necessarily had to be done because people were resigning and we had to get some people to take their places, but eventually the report of the reorganization committee was put before the board. When you look at what actually happened, not much of it was put into effect. Instead we adopted a purported reorganization that consisted of hiring some people to take over administrative chores that we didn't think Mike was capable of doing. It's a story that seems to have no ending. [laughs]

Lage: It's been the concern throughout the seventies--how should the club be organized.

Sherwin: Yes, indeed, but not only how should it be organized but where is it going to find the tools. One of my biggest headaches was the failure of our various computer systems.

Lage: Were these newly installed?

Sherwin: Different ones were installed from time to time but every one of them was misleading. It was a mess.

Lage: How did you feel that the board handled all of this. I noticed-- I think it was in letters in your file--they talked about the board being "in a bog," as if they weren't really grasping onto the immense problems and moving ahead. Did you have that sense?

Sherwin: Yes, I suppose so. Partly it was because of the continuing difference of opinion as to how the club should be operated that existed on the board. You could never be confident that however wise a proposal might be administratively speaking, it would not meet with other than opposition from such people as Moss and Litton and their like. [chuckles]

It was also true that each of us had a substantial quota of ignorance. [We] didn't know how to get information. We didn't really have too good an idea of exactly what the financial situation was. We had doubts about the sources of that information. There were some fine people on the staff, but in view of what had happened we had reservations about their competence. We didn't really know what to do about it if we did have the facts at hand. We knew certain things we had to do, the obvious things, but not actually the nickel and dime way of making it work. None of us, I think, was trained as an administrator. ##

Lage: You mentioned that board didn't seem administratively able to really take hold of the club. Did anyone think of turning this over to the staff?

Sherwin: Those who were on the board who had this kind of competence unfortunately were just not able to take the time to do it. You have to realize that by this time the presidency had become a really huge undertaking as far as personal commitment of time is concerned. Past presidents on the board, for instance, felt that they no longer had to spend that much time with it, and, having given that much time previously, they're right. Will Siri undoubtedly prejudiced his professional career by spending so much time with the Sierra Club, and I think that that's true with almost everyone who has done it.

To get back to the original question, I suppose the person most closely identified with the type of person who could have run the club was Chuck Huestis, and here he was at Duke University across the country, and he couldn't spend the time. You could go on illustrating this proposition.

The second half of your question is I don't think anybody thought that Mike was capable of the business administration of the club, nor capable of delegating the authority to somebody that would be capable of it. Mike has his own personality problems, one of which is that he just does not like to have strong people around him. He likes "yes men."

Lage: You didn't feel you could pull in a really capable administrator to work along with him?

Sherwin: It would create a problem if we could have identified such a person.

Sherwin: We looked for him. The executive committee reserved certain authority to select--or not necessarily select but at least to approve--the appointment of people at the top level of the administration of the club. It's not exactly an attractive spot for a person who has unlimited capabilities as an administrator. The pay is not good. The opportunities for advancement are practically nil. What are you going to do after you have been the housekeeper for the Sierra Club?

Lage: Okay, do you think we have enough background so that next time we can go into the start of your presidency and all of the conflict that surrounded that?

Sherwin: Yes, why don't we.

III SIERRA CLUB PRESIDENCY, 1971-73: INTERNAL AFFAIRS
[Interview 3: October 27, 1980]##

Controversial Proposal For A Paid President

Lage: Today is our third interview session with Ray Sherwin, October 27, 1980. Ray, you said you wanted to start out with a personal note.

Sherwin: Yes, in the organizational meeting of 1969 after the CMC candidates were elected to the board for some reason or other I was elected secretary. One of my reasons for mentioning it at this time is that after that I involved my wife very heavily in the work. We worked together on the minutes. She brushed up on her stenographic skills so that she could resume taking shorthand and transcribing. Then we would go over the minutes together very carefully, so that we were pretty confident that they were accurate.

The result of this was that by the time I was elected president, she was ready to give me the same kind of help when it came to writing speeches and preparing other kinds of paperwork. I did make numerous speeches. She not only took them in shorthand and transcribed them--or took a lot of them--but she also edited them for me. I think that I profited a great deal from that.

Now to go back to matters less personal, the office of the presidency at that time was a very, very demanding one. Phil Berry took it very seriously and as a result his professional career was severely truncated. He is a very competent lawyer. He's a very articulate, persuasive, analytical person, still with capacity to inject that kind of emotional content so that it could be either funny or it could be very serious, but whatever it was it was effective. But it was clear by the end of his regime that a person who contemplated doing the job of the presidency had to assume that he was going to be spending at least a full working day at the job practically every day of the week.

Lage: Was that because of the upheaval and the changes?

Sherwin: Not necessarily. It was because of the social conditions and the conservation campaigns upon which we were embarking and the attempt to persuade the American public that all of this was very important. This was the genesis of Phil's idea that he couldn't see anybody on the horizon who had that much time to spare. He was willing to do it, but he'd have to make his decision whether to make a full-time career out of conservation or go back to the law practice. It had to be one way or the other practically. So this was when he proposed that there be a chief operating officer and that he be it. What happened was, I think, unexpected by almost everybody.

The last session we talked about the social trend towards denigrating leadership. Mike, throughout this period, had been very low key. So when Phil proposed this I think it frightened an awful lot of people who were tending towards this peculiar phenomenon of just slapping all centers of power down and the leadership along with it.

At least the reaction from all of the various chapters and regions of the club was quite adverse to Phil's idea. They trusted Mike to maintain this low-keyed sort of non-leadership stance, and they just didn't want Phil to get out of hand. They thought highly, I think, of what he'd accomplished while president, but they just feared that he'd become another Brower if he were to step into Brower's position of power.

I think, also, that this was stimulated by some politicking on the part of the staff. I do not know whether Mike had anything directly to do with it or not. Probably not, but certainly Jonathan Ela did. I can't think that we would have received all of these communications from all over the United States from different chapters of the club unless something had triggered it to make that timing so propitious.

Lage: How was it brought out in the open that this was under consideration? Did Phil just talk individually with board members and then it got out or was it actually announced?

Sherwin: Well, I'm not sure, but I think that it was discussed among the members of the board and then at the organization meeting of May of 1971, and it flowed back through council representatives and staff.

Lage: May '71 was when you were elected president.

Sherwin: Correct.

Lage: Was it initially thought at that time there would be a changeover to the paid president.

Sherwin: No, I think that things were in quite a state of flux at that period. But I think, no, by the time I was elected president the idea of a paid president had been abandoned. But the presence of that controversy did enable me to accomplish one thing which made it possible for me to take the job. Rather than just have the assistance of a secretary I was afforded what I think they called an executive assistant--an upper level staff job rather than just nuts and bolts support.

Theoretically, it would have been desirable to have employed the executive director in that capacity. But my assessment then was that this was not feasible at that time because of the conception of the executive director's job that Mike had.

Lage: Do you mean that you felt that the executive director could also function as sort of an assistant to the president?

Sherwin: Yes. As a matter of fact, my idea was that that should have been his prime function, but by this time at least I thought that was water over the dam. That's one of the areas in which I didn't do well as president. I never really worked that out with Mike. We just sort of worked along, he doing his thing, and I doing mine.

Lage: I wonder if it has ever been worked out.

Sherwin: No, it hasn't. It's still the same way today. You see evidences of it in certain things that come out from the board minutes. I can't quote it, but I do recall something in the minutes of, I think it was the March or April meeting, about revitalizing some of the issue committees so as to enable them to take ultimate responsibility and charge of giving effect to policy.

Lage: There is a constant concern with reorganization in the seventies.

Sherwin: Yes, we keep replotting the same ground. Some people, whom I respect very highly, think it's a good thing we do have this constant question. Will Siri, for example, talks about the benefits that we derive from the tension between the staff and the volunteers. I really don't know. I sort of regret that I didn't face it head on and bring about some kind of a resolution of it. But I was skeptical, kind of uncertain at the time what the result might be, and furthermore, I just had too much to do to devote an awful lot of time to that kind of a problem.

Lage: It might have been the president alone couldn't have done it, considering all of the feelings in the club itself.

Sherwin: Yes, that's right.

Lage: Do you think that any of these conflicts regarding Phil Berry had a tie at all with conservation ideology, differences in points of view about what should be accomplished?

Sherwin: No, I do not.

Lage: Some of the news reports at the time bring that out.

Sherwin: Yes, there were accusations that came out of irresponsible sources on both sides. From the other side the accusation was that the volunteers really didn't know what they were doing in some areas and that out of ignorance they might compromise the way or lose some of gains that might otherwise be achieved. Then there were rumbles from some people who totally mistook Mike's deportment and lifestyle and manner of conducting himself to be a weakness as far as conservation is concerned, and that's utterly wrong. I think there wasn't any question but both sides were completely dedicated. Their differences of opinion were of an entirely different sort.

Lage: Mike was as interested in the package of survival issues it seems to me.

Sherwin: Oh, yes, and as I think we mentioned last time, I think he made some contributions towards it before it ever came out in the package that Phil presented.

Lage: What about campaign tactics? Was Berry more radical in his tactics do you think?

Sherwin: Let's put it this way. I think Phil had the capacity for being a little bit more flamboyant in a manner which would attract public attention than Mike.

Lage: Was that a concern at all?

Sherwin: I don't really think so. For example, I don't remember when it occurred but there was a beef with Standard Oil over their polluting the bay waters, among other things. Phil picketed the Standard Oil Building right across the street [from club headquarters] and attracted a great deal of attention. I think it was a very helpful thing to do. It drove poor old Otto Miller up through the ceiling. [chuckles] He was the chairman of Standard Oil.

Lage: [laughs] It got to him!

Sherwin: I think so. There were some disaffected Standard Oil employees along about that time who published a little surreptitious underground newspaper called the Standard Oiler, I think. Reading that, it seemed to me that it was a result of Phil's theatrics!

Lage: It was after you were president that you held this open hearing at Clair Tappaan Lodge in June, 1971, to talk about reorganization. Had the idea already been given up then of bringing Phil on as paid president? Were you searching for other ways of resolving the organizational problems?

Sherwin: My impression of that meeting and, my goodness, I should go back and read the minutes before I talk to you about it, my impression of it was that that meeting at Clair Tappaan was devoted almost entirely to a discussion of seeing if we could crystalize a little better our aims and priorities. This goes on periodically, too. It's going on now, and I must say by now I'm quite skeptical of going through the process again because I think priorities tend to get chosen by serendipity. If you've got a man who is capable of taking over a campaign, then that becomes your priority.

Evaluating the Club Staff

Lage: That's an interesting viewpoint. Was this idea of bringing a paid president in a criticism of McCloskey do you think? Was that implied?

Sherwin: Yes, I think it was.

Lage: But was the idea to continue with him and a paid president?

Sherwin: Right, yes. He was very good in a lot of areas. Mike, to repeat, was low-keyed and consequently then, and probably now, could not well perform the function of public relations in the sense of attracting public attention. However, he was a very, very bright person. He was capable of detailed analysis and capable of remembering facts like [Jimmy] Carter can in detail to support conservation conclusions. Most of all Mike is a very shrewd tactician when it comes to legislative matters. Maybe he's entitled to a broader compliment, and I should say he's a very shrewd strategist as far as legislative policies are concerned. He works well in guiding our Washington staff in working with the national legislature.

But Mike had some deficiencies about which we were all concerned. I'm repeating myself I think from the last interview, but Mike is uncomfortable working with strong people. Consequently, he tends to have people around him who are distinctly less qualified than he is. That, I think, is quite true even today. An example is Carl Pope. I think that he is one of the poorest persons we could have to be formulating political policy or representing the Sierra Club before any public bodies that have to do with politics.

Sherwin: On the conservation staff Paul Swatek is a very competent person,

Lage: He started out as a volunteer?

Sherwin: Yes, and in his own way he's a pretty strong person. But again, he is very, very low-keyed. He's a detail man. I don't know one way or the other what his present capacity is as far as conceiving and formulating underlying policy. But you look at the people around, and you can see that they all have some very appealing qualities. But none is an aggressive person who himself wants power to that extent.

Lage: What about Brock Evans?

Sherwin: Brock works in Washington D. C., and I think he may be an exception to this, but being separated usually by three thousand miles it doesn't make that much difference. Now, I don't know Brock too well, so what I say about him has to be taken with a grain of salt. But some of the other people in the Washington office I think we'd be better off without. Some on the staff that work for legislative matters frighten me because they are so narrow.

Conflicts Over Compromise: the San Joaquin Wilderness

Sherwin: Let me tell you a story to illustrate what I am talking about. A lot of us in the Sierra Club work in other conservation organizations that are not really under the thumb of the Sierra Club. One such has been what was formerly called the Save the John Muir Trail Association and now is called the San Joaquin Wilderness Association. It has to do with the San Joaquin Wilderness Area where once upon a time the big issue was the [Minaret Summit] road.

Recently, with respect to the San Joaquin proposed wilderness it became evident that maybe this was the year to get it protected through the legislature because of the fact that we had people like [John] Seiberling and [Phil] Burton ready and willing to carry the ball. So our local committee which had Sierra Club people on it, including Joe Fontaine and others, gathered momentum in our working on this problem. Among other things that we did, we started talking with everybody else that might have a conflicting interest to see if there were acceptable compromises that would bring about our mutually presenting a boundary for the San Joaquin Wilderness that was acceptable to everybody.

So we started talking with the Far Western Ski Association, with Dave McCoy, the operator of the Mammoth Mountain Ski complex, and with a group of people representing irrigation districts that had their eyes on the north fork of the San Joaquin River and other streams

Sherwin: as a source of irrigation water, with probably some power plants. We started talking, mostly through Ike Livermore, with the timber industry because there is timber at a place called Porcupine Flats in the gore between the Middle Fork and the South Fork of the San Joaquin River. It looks good but upon examination is really not commercially feasible. The only way to get it out would be either to build a terribly expensive bridge or bring it out by helicopter, and the topography there is something that would make a helicopter prohibitively expensive because you wouldn't be taking the timber just down hill. You'd have to be taking it over terrain which would make it too long and too expensive.

So we began to make substantial progress. Then we started talking with the club staff because we weren't personally acquainted with Seiberling's administrative assistant in Washington and the Sierra Club was. I never understood my conversation with John McComb. It was just so much gibberish. As far as the local staff member was concerned, I reached this response from Russ Shay whose office is in Sacramento.

Lage: He is with the Sierra Club?

Sherwin: Yes, he is. He said, "The Sierra Club does not enter into compromises going in," which told me that we couldn't get any help out of the Sierra Club staff. What he said was nonsense anyway because it's a question of timing, and it's a question of judgment as to how much you can ultimately get. You always compromise eventually in some way. I know there are some purists who would be aghast at admitting that, but it is true.

Lage: But he didn't want to see a compromise worked out before it was presented?

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: So did you go above them at all?

Sherwin: Well, yes. We had our own committee member go back to Washington, D. C., and talk with these people and what's presently in the bill is acceptable. Dave McCoy and, I assume, the Far Western Ski Association have given up the idea of any further development on the southwest side of Mammoth Mountain. I don't know whether you are familiar with that country at all, but if that were developed it would be visible from the John Muir Wilderness, from the Dana-Minaret's Wilderness, and certainly from the newly we-hope-to-be-created San Joaquin Wilderness. So that's a big plus.

Sherwin: Now, in return for that we have agreed that the boundaries of the present wilderness would be along the San Joaquin ridge. That gives us a lot more than the Forest Service was ever proposing. It gives up to them the possibility of developing the eastern slopes of the ridge along the San Joaquin summit, and that's giving up quite a bit. But on the other hand, we have been working so closely with the people at Mammoth Mountain, including the architect Alan O'Conner and the fellow who has been all over the country working on ski developments, Don Redman, and with Dave, and with Gary McCoy. They have assured us that they will so design the ski lifts and work with us so closely that they will avoid any impingement on highly sensitive habitats.

Lage: Are they fairly sensitive to these matters, or do you think it's just the pressure of the people in conservation?

Sherwin: Let's start with Dave McCoy. I think Dave McCoy is probably among the best ski operators that ever came down the pike, and I think he is sensitive to certain aspects of this matter. Dave McCoy is also a very pioneer type entrepreneur and does not believe that anybody should have the right to tell him what he is going to do in his bailiwick. Dave McCoy is also not deeply educated in ecological matters. For example, when you clear an area for ski development you often see more wildlife than you ever saw before. Now, there are some reasons for this. Some kinds of animals thrive on proximity to human beings and some just become visible like the deer. So I don't think he is sophisticated. But I also think he is a very decent person.

Alan O'Conner is sophisticated and Alan O'Conner is, I think, quite willing, ready, and able to work with us to make the ultimate development, if it ever occurs, as compatible with preserving a decent environment as possible. It may never occur. Last time when I was up there I sensed that with the development of Mammoth Mountain to the extent that they are planning within the next very few years and which will never get that far north, they may be content. They may not want any bigger operation.

Lage: Was this compromise agreed to by Sierra Club volunteers? By the RCC [Regional Conservation Committee] responsible for that area?

Sherwin: No.

Lage: You didn't go that route?

Sherwin: No, we tried that route and only got part way. Part way it was agreed to, but not all the way. No, they are fearful of the abandonment of the opportunity to explore fully the possibilities of wilderness on

Sherwin: the east side of that slope or, if that's not possible, they fear what may happen there. They've got some very fine people over there, and I respect their fears--Mary Dedecker (maybe you have heard of her in connection with the BLM Wilderness Areas), Enid Larson and others.

Lage: But you yourself feel comfortable about that east ridge?

Sherwin: I think we are achieving something that is a great deal more important and that we could not achieve unless we were willing to make mild compromises. For example, if we get the San Joaquin Wilderness into this system then we are forever protected from any further idea of a road across there, which would be devastating. Then if we get what we now have in a package--I think in excess of 110,000 acres of wilderness there through the main part of the San Joaquin River drainage including most of the north fork and the lower part of the south fork where it hasn't been protected before--we're getting an awful lot.

I hate to give up some of this eastern part. There are some places on the eastern side that are truly beautiful. It's an unusual area. The San Joaquin ridge, which is the summit of the Sierra from Mammoth Mountain on north to the June Lake area, is basically hard rock but it's capped with volcanic material. Out from under this volcanic cap there is a whole series of little springs on both sides that flow--down all of these little canyons, and they are what make the gardens possible. ## There are gardens along every little stream on both sides. There is one on the west side which is remarkable in that there is a whole acre, I think, of leopard lily which is just a mass and then contrasted with the monkshood and larkspur. Anyway, I guess that is a little bit beside the point.

Lage: No, I think it's a good example of the difference of approach.

Sherwin: There is another thing which I think may be important in the future. I am not sure. There are a lot of people on the east side who are loudly supportive of development, and there are certain inhibitive natural factors that exist, one of them being water. I have always been frightened that some day somebody would want to tunnel into that San Joaquin ridge and bring water from the west side over across to the east side in order to help the development. If we get the wilderness there then we can knock that in the head.

Lage: Water to help the development of the ski area?

Sherwin: The houses and the commercial enterprises that are satellites of the ski development.

Lage: So this would give permanent protection there.

Sherwin: As far as that particular problem. I'm not sure that anybody would ever think of it, but I've always had a concern about it. ##

You inquired about our relationship with Norman Livermore--Ike Livermore [California's secretary for Resources under Governor Ronald Reagan, 1966-74]. My impression is that he is entitled to almost sole credit for convincing Reagan as governor with respect to the good record in part that the Reagan administration enjoyed on environmental matters. For example, I'm sure that it was Ike who convinced Reagan that the proposed trans-Sierra highway over Minaret Summit was a bummer. It was from Ike to Reagan to Nixon that turned the tables on that particular project at that time.

I think that Ike is still a devoted conservationist. He is still a member of the San Joaquin Wilderness Committee,

Lage: When you say you are sure it was him, did you have any discussions with him about it or do you just know from knowing his own point of view?

Sherwin: I don't know that I have discussed it with him. I couldn't put a detail to it, but I'm just positive that it was he. I think that Ike as a former member of the board of directors of the Sierra Club, incidentally, was convinced that the preservation of the Sierra still ought to be the prime task of the Sierra Club.

Lage: How do you think the Dos Rios Dam, for instance--what were his feelings in that regard?

Sherwin: Oh, he was very much opposed to the dam, and I'm sure he convinced Reagan to oppose it. ##

Lage: Okay, let's go back a little bit to the 1971 reorganization. What was Edgar Wayburn's feeling about the paid president? Did he support McCloskey more strongly?

Sherwin: I'm not sure. My impression would be that he would probably tend to, because McCloskey presented no threat to him.

Lage: But did he take a stand on the reorganization?

Sherwin: I can't remember.

Lage: It wasn't a strong factor?

Sherwin: The only way I could answer that question would be to go back and re-examine the minutes, and I haven't done that.

Lage: I don't see it that strongly in the minutes.

Sherwin: Maybe it isn't there.

Administrative and Staff Adjustments

Lage: How did your staff assistant, Jack Townsley, work out?

Sherwin: By and large it worked out very well. Jack had a liking to do kinds of things that I didn't particularly like to do, and he also worked as a buffer between Mike and me which certainly reduced the tension. What effect it had upon the ultimate governance of the club is probably another question. Jack also assisted me to perceive things that were going on that I might not otherwise have been able to see.

Let me stop and explain my own situation. I devoted a full day's work to being a judge--I felt that I had to do that--and another full day's work to being a president of the Sierra Club. But in order to do this, I could not be at the office of the Sierra Club sometimes when things were going on. For example, at that time the courts weren't nearly so busy as they are now, and I could do most of what I had to do, if I didn't happen to have a trial going, by 11:00 in the morning. Then I'd scoot for San Francisco. But then a lot happens between 9:00 in the morning and say 12:00 when I'd get there that I couldn't see, and Jack saw for me. I think that he saw pretty accurately and kept me informed. He would ride me to do certain things that I didn't particularly enjoy doing, but he was helpful in that respect--just like a wife almost! [laughter]

Then Jack was pretty shrewd at appraising members of the staff, and he could tell me where the weaknesses were showing up. We went through a lot of different changes in personnel that had to be done. I think he helped a great deal in clueing us. There was another thing that was going on all the time. Jack, I think, was the first person to spot in what desperate straits we were as far as the computer systems were concerned. I think he saw that months before Mike did, and it was Mike's primary responsibility. That really got us in hot water. We were reading computer output as if heaven was going to prevail forever as far as income and expenses were concerned, and it was just totally deceiving us.

Lage: It wasn't programmed properly?

Sherwin: That's right, it was not programmed properly and very likely also it wasn't getting the right kind of input from the staff. Do you recall Blueprint for Survival and The Limits to Growth, computer

Sherwin: analysis of what was happening to natural resources? Some persons who didn't like what those reports were saying said, "Garbage in, garbage out." Well, that was very possibly true as far as the Sierra Club's computer work was concerned, but certainly the programming stank also.

We suffered through this successively, I think, with three different computer outfits and never achieved a satisfactory resolution of it. We were always guessing wrong as to what the future was. Financial planning was miserable because of it.

Lage: You hired an administrative officer in 1972.

Sherwin: Yes, Max Linn from Sandia.

Lage: Was that the same Max Linn who founded the John Muir Institute?

Sherwin: Yes, the same person; a very fine fellow but he didn't serve the purpose for which he was retained by us. We retained him to work out a practically functioning housekeeping staff at the Sierra Club. Max had some excellent ideas. The only problem was they weren't immediately applicable, and he was uncomfortable and restive. It finally turned out that what he had in mind he was supposed to do, and what we had in mind that he was supposed to do were two different things so eventually he resigned. It's a shame because he had a lot of capabilities. But we just misread each other.

Lage: Isn't he the one who worked closely with Brower in the John Muir Institute and hired Brower or paid part of his salary or something?

Sherwin: I don't know about that. It could be.

Lage: I don't know the timing on this, but I thought it was about the same time.

Sherwin: It could be. Brower had several top supporters that we didn't want to let go. One that I admired very much was a fellow by the name of Jeff Ingram, who was a southwest representative. I hated to see him go because I thought he was highly competent and effective. But we lost him.

Lage: You lost several of your representatives?

Sherwin: We lost some very good men. We lost Gary Soucie. We lost Jeff Ingram. We lost Peter Borrelli.

Lage: The records sound as if there was a lot of staff discontent, not necessarily on this higher level, but even on the lower level of the office.

Sherwin: It ran both ways. The publications department had a number of people in it none of us thought too highly about. There was something else that was a problem to the club that really would have existed whether or not we had any of these controversies. A lot of youngsters--idealistic youngsters--wanted to go to work for the Sierra Club when they were over educated for the jobs they undertook. People would come in there with a master's degree and work as a secretary. After a while there is bound to be some discontent if they don't get to have as much input into policies as they thought that they were going to have.

There were problems of personalities because the kinds of people who gathered around Dave Brower were usually--how shall I say it?--characters. They were talented. Many of them were talented people. Some of them were just sycophants to Dave. Once you get that kind of close feeling about somebody it's pretty difficult for them to adjust to a different breed of cat. So the feeling was mutual.

Lage: It was a time of change, it seems.

Delegating the Presidential Functions, an Experiment

Sherwin: Yes, it was. Of course, you understand this was going on among the volunteers at the same time. I think you asked last time about Dick Sill and about his function in the reorganization. Well, when the board attempted to reorganize itself, and I've forgotten what the timing was on this vis à vis the Phil Berry episode, the idea was that the job of the president could be made easier if the president would only delegate some of his functions. So we proceeded to delegate some of the functions. Among others to whom I delegated functions was the same Dick Sill, and he didn't react positively at all. All he could see was that I was giving him a job which he couldn't do without much more secretarial help than he had. I don't think he even tried to exercise his imagination as to what could be done.

I think this is another facet of it. I think that not only didn't he want anybody else to have any power, but he didn't know how to handle it if it were given to him on a silver platter, as I tried to do.

Lage: Wasn't it his idea that the president delegate these functions?

Sherwin: It was his idea, and I was trying to be agreeable about it. It's a function of a person's personality. This may not be relevant at

Sherwin: this point, but let me contrast what happened when I attempted to do this with Dick Sill with what happened in a different field.

Up to '71 and maybe even longer--maybe until '72--we had been flirting with going international. But we had been mostly concerned with the institutional problems associated with it. The Sierra Club attributes a great deal of value to its name. Do we allow foreign organizations organized under foreign law, having no responsibility to the Sierra Club except through such contracts as we might make with them, fully to exercise the independent judgment that a chapter or a regional conservation committee or whatever should have? Or shouldn't there be a Sierra Club-England, a Sierra Club-Canada, a Sierra Club-Australia, a Sierra Club-South Africa, all of which had groups of Sierra Clubbers interested in some kind of an affiliation? Or should they set up their own organization and then we would just cooperate by forming coalitions with them?

This problem was confronted by our international committee under Al Forsyth. This got pretty well worked out, and then came the time for the Sierra Club International to start earning its money and doing good works internationally. By great luck, I ran across Nick Robinson, and he became chairman of the international committee.

Lage: When you say ran across him, he was in the club?

Sherwin: Oh, yes. I made him chairman of the committee. He took over, and as contrasted with Dick Sill he had nothing to work with. Nick made Sierra Club International. He just took charge, and he did it. He had a great deal of help later when we got so that we could afford a staff assistant in the person of Patricia Rambach (she is now Patricia Scharlin since her divorce from her husband)--a great girl, very competent, very likeable, who has gone a long way to give the Sierra Club credence with governmental organizations, conservation organizations and everything.

Anyway, the point of this story is that some people can handle it, and some people just don't understand it. They can talk about it, but they really don't know what they're talking about.

So back we go to reorganization. The reorganization as far as the board's taking and delegation of authority didn't really work. Logically, it couldn't work the way Dick envisioned. He imagined, for example, that with respect to a specific item like the mail, the vice-president for administration--that was supposed to be Will Siri--would have all the mail channeled to him. Then he would parcel it out. The president would never see the mail that was to be parceled out, say, to Dick Sill as membership chairman and as chairman of internal relationships. Well, it never

Sherman: happened that way, and I don't know how you could have the president in perpetual ignorance of what was going on. [laughter]

Lage: Or find board members who wanted to take on that much work also.

Sherwin: Correct.

Welding a National Sierra Club Organization

Lage: What about the club's growth to a nationwide organization? I think you mentioned last time that that gained a lot of momentum in these years.

Sherwin: Oh, indeed. Well, it was certainly encouraged. The decision to go national had been made sometime before I became president. Maybe that's a misquote. People talked about the decision to go national. I really think it sort of crept into being without any one decision being made to go national. It just kind of grew. In any event, the club was growing very, very rapidly at that time. It presented problems as well as great opportunities. I was delighted to see it grow, but I was also conscious of the problem that was exacerbated by the Brower conflict. The people in the chapters hardly knew what to make of it. Most of them didn't have personal contact with any of the people involved in the controversy, so they had very little way of judging.

Among other things, I wanted very badly to weld the many chapters together into one Sierra Club-United States anyway, international also. I also wanted to try to tell them what was going on at San Francisco and let them feel as if they were part of what was going on in San Francisco. I also wanted to try to soft pedal the conflict between the Brower factions and the CMC.

Part of that is self-contradictory, and I could have had some better training in diplomacy in certain areas in attempting to answer questions and let everybody know exactly what had gone on in San Francisco. Some people felt that I was really opening old wounds by talking about some of the issues that had been involved in the Brower controversy. Maybe this is correct. Maybe I should have handled it differently.

Lage: Were they interested? Were they questioning about what had gone on? This was over two years later.

Sherwin: Oh, yes.

Lage: So that was still a live issue?

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: Most of the chapters supported the CMC, other than the Atlantic chapter.

Sherwin: Yes, I think so.

Lage: What areas are you thinking about?

Sherwin: Tennessee, to a certain extent in New York, a little bit in Washington, D. C., and in the Pacific Northwest. It wore a different cloak by this time. The Brower factions had been successful in putting certain people on the board who were still on the board and who were able to get re-elected. They weren't about to give up altogether, and they constituted a thorn in my side and in Phil's side and later as long as I know. I guess maybe the most conspicuous person was Larry Moss. Now, there are two Larry Mosses. There is one from Washington, D. C., and there is one who is a different breed of cat from the West Coast here. I guess he is up in Arcata now. I'm not sure. But he was the southern California representative. Then he became associate conservation director in San Francisco [and] did a fine job. Then he became spokesman for the Planning and Conservation League, I think.

Lage: Didn't he get into the [Jerry] Brown administration at some point?

Sherwin: I'm not sure. He was certainly relied upon by the Brown administration. Whether he was ever actually hired by them or not I don't know. But something happened between him and the PLC, and he got out and I'm not sure exactly what he's doing. But he's fine.

The other one, Larry I. [Moss], was an engineer, I guess. He was never at a loss for words, and it didn't matter what the subject was, he almost inevitably took the opposite side from whatever it was that I wanted or that any of our group wanted and would argue extensively. He is quite articulate. He had a tendency to go off on certain fetishes. Somebody told him about marginal costing at one time. So he made something of a study of it, and it became a hobbyhorse that he rode for at least two years.

Lage: Is this on energy pricing?

Sherwin: This is a matter of marketing policy on the part of private enterprise. He developed it so that it was presumably the policy that the Federal Power Commission should follow in setting utility rates, or any power commission. Anyway, he was a pest. He was eventually president after I was. He was from the East Coast, not here in the West. It gave him an opportunity, I guess, to follow his theory

Sherwin: Then I made some serious misjudgments too. I spoke before about having supported Claire Dedrick for the board. Okay, now I'm going to talk about personalities and this part I think should not be published until some [later] time.

Claire Dedrick had had some psychiatric problems earlier, which was one thing that we were a little bit concerned about, but what it obscured was her real weakness. This was that if anybody flattered her she was wholly and completely under the sway of that person no matter who it might be from then on. Larry Moss was clever enough to see this, and I wasn't. Neither was anybody else in my particular group, as a result of which Claire became slavish to Larry [I.] Moss's viewpoint, to the extent that one time at an open board meeting she apologized publicly to Larry for voting differently than he did on a particular issue.

Lage: Do you think this personality trait had anything to do with her later role in the Brown administration? She made a lot of conservationists unhappy.

Sherwin: I don't know. I can only suspect. Tony Kline called two or three of us before she was ever appointed by Brown. We warned him. Again, I was probably the most candid of anybody. In fact, I know that Tony called Will Siri, and I think Will Siri waffled. I don't think he was candid. I think Phil Berry was candid. I know I was.

Lage: It didn't do any good?

Sherwin: It didn't do any good in that respect. However, when I retired I think that it had something to do with the fact that Tony by that time had more respect for my judgment, and so he interviewed me for hours on end about the possible choice of a successor in my office.

Then there was a girl elected from Utah, June Viavant, who had been a very good worker at the Utah level. But when she came on the board she never did her homework. She didn't know what was going on. So she tended to vote with Claire. Claire always voted with Larry and Martin.

Sherwin: that everything should be done by the executive director and nothing by the president. I really don't know. I was kind of disgusted about that particular election and didn't follow all of the history very closely thereafter.

Anyway, this group of which he was probably the most conspicuous representative did exist. It was represented on the board by him, by Martin Litton.

[The remainder of this page has been sealed at the interviewee's request until December 1992.]

Sherwin: It was a continuous problem and one which was not something that you could totally ignore when people talked to you about the operations of the board. But to repeat, some people interpreted it as an effort on my part to rekindle the flame of controversy that had been a negative thing as far as the Sierra Club was concerned, and they weren't too happy about it. Otherwise, I think my efforts to bring the club together were quite successful.

We made a point of going to meetings of chapters or regional committees and taking the time to look into their local conservation problems. To us, of course, it was very beneficial also because we got to see intimately many parts of the country that we would not otherwise have known about.

Lage: You are talking about Janet and yourself?

Sherwin: Yes. We have many, many pleasant memories, and it was an eye opener to us who had been pretty much stuck on the highways before to be exposed and to appreciate how beautiful the United States is--the United States are--and how many hidden wonders there are all over the place ranging from places in Alabama and Georgia and Texas to Alaska.

Lage: Ted Snyder told me about a canoe trip you took in his neck of the woods.

Sherwin: Yes. Do you know the movie, "Deliverance"? This was the river! [laughter] Oh, that was fun! That was fun.

Lage: How did you find the chapters say in the East and South? Were they the same type of members you have out here [with] the same purposes, or did you find a distinct difference?

Sherwin: No, very much the same, and I think even more gung ho because they hadn't been bloodied so much yet as the people on the West Coast. They had fewer members, and most of their members seemed to me to be very active, very interested, and just full of ideas and pursuing all kinds of good projects. There are a lot of good people in the Sierra Club, a lot of interesting, capable people.

Lage: I think as it was in the beginning on the West Coast that primarily it was professional types who were the nucleus of new groups and chapters and regional committees in the East--businessmen, professional men. ##

Sherwin: The people in the chapters were very accommodating in terms of my convenience. By the time I was president, I was getting numerous invitations to make speeches all over the country--the Petroleum Institute in Texas; a national press conference sponsored by the

Sherwin: Electric Institute in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I think, some place up there. In any event, this was happening all the time. So since I would be getting my traveling expenses paid by somebody else outside the Sierra Club I would try to make it so that I could touch bases with the local chapters at or about the same time--take a long weekend, for example. They were very accomodating to this.

Lage: What was their attitude towards San Francisco, the office and the board? I noticed Dick Sill mentioned that the chapters "held the board in contempt" was his phrase.

Sherwin: I think his judgment was wrong. I think that there was everywhere a feeling that there was a lack of communication between the board and the chapters, that they somehow ought to be made a part of what was being done by the board, a great deal more than was in fact done. But I never saw anything to indicate that there was contempt for the board. There was some resentment, and I am not sure that there was ever an understanding of the fact that the board, at least the CMC-oriented members of the board, were very conscious of this problem and wanted as much as possible to bring the local people into the whole club, make them feel as if they had something to do with what the board was trying to do.

There was never a time when it wasn't possible for representatives of the local chapters to have their say with respect to the board proceedings. True, the board usually had the first say, but then it was thrown open to comments from the audience. Now, where we failed at that time, which has been worked out since, was in the area of administrative problems being hashed out at the chapter level before they got to the board, specifically, for example, the matter of budgetary proceedings.

I should have seen this, but I didn't see it at the time. You can't expect people to participate in board decisions about budget when the first time the people had seen the budget is when they appeared at the board meeting. They didn't have any time adequately to prepare to bring their point of view before the board. I can remember one time when it was pretty upsetting to them too when we had to adopt a budget, and they didn't have the opportunity really to talk about it because they hadn't had this information.

Lage: This was just an oversight really?

Sherwin: It wasn't deliberate. It was just oversight, yes; something that now seems so obvious, but at that time it wasn't.

Lage: These methods were being worked out then.

Sherwin: Right. Since that time they've been working on them, and I think now there is a great deal less of that. No, I think Dick exaggerated.

Sherwin: But I think Dick tended in his discussions of this kind of thing to restrict his audience to not too many people, too.

There was a time when every conservation problem came to the board of directors of the Sierra Club, not only for approval as to policy, but even when you could be certain that policy would be approved, as a matter of public relations. For example, when we were working on opposing the Mammoth Pass Road, I brought it before the board for a statement of policy against the road. Now, the board's policy a long, long time ago had been a little bit different. So there was, in addition to public relations, another reason for just making sure. But as the club expanded nationwide it became impractical for this kind of thing to be done, and there were problems that affected more than one chapter where it seemed as if really it ought not to have to come to the board if what they wanted to do locally was generally within Sierra Club policy.

So it's kind of hard to tell whether the regional conservation committees grew up because of deliberate creation on the part of the board or whether they grew up because of convenience as people worked together on problems that affected more than one chapter. Whatever, they did grow up, and I think they now perform an invaluable service to the club because they can decide local policies, reconcile problems between chapters, and initiate issues before the board that are in fact nationwide or international problems.

This leads right into the problem of energy, incidentally.

Lage: That might be a good idea, to use the evolution of energy policy to illustrate the use of the regional conservation committees.

IV ENERGY POLICY ISSUES, 1972-1974

Formulating Policy: the Decision-Making Process

Sherwin: I think that the jump-off of the club's conspicuous involvement with the energy question occurred when we had our conference at Johnson College in Vermont [January 14-16, 1972]. The organizer of it was Keith Roberts. There were a number of people who encouraged it and worked with him on it. I think it turned out to be a very successful conference. We had papers delivered by people who later became nationwide prophets as far as energy problems are concerned. I encouraged it. I participated in it as president.

Lage: Did the club help fund that?

Sherwin: [pause] I'm certain the Sierra Club Foundation worked with Keith on it. As far as the club's contribution, I don't remember whether we contributed anything or not. I was always a little bit offended by the fact that my opening remarks to the conference were not printed in the subsequent summary because I think I had something important to say which was long neglected. [chuckles]

Lage: Would you like to repeat them here?

Sherwin: Well, the main idea was that whatever we might decide as to substantive policy, we are also to be thinking about the institutional problems involved in giving effect to energy policy. The kind of thing that I was thinking about was the fact that at that time the Federal Power Commission had two functions, one of which was to regulate the public utilities, but the other one of which was to promote power.

Lage; Similar to the AEC having two functions.

Sherwin: Yes, right, and the tendency is for the regulatory function to be coopted by the promoting one, as a result of which the regulations were quite ineffective in terms of the kinds of objectives that we wanted to achieve. This is just one illustration. There are a thousand illustrations all over the country. So, anyway,

Sherwin: what I had to say was ignored and remained ignored for a long time. Finally, they are catching up with it, I think. [chuckles]

But it was a good conference, and there were some very good papers presented. So that got people generally in the Sierra Club hepped up and talking about it. Several of the regional conservation committees began working on proposals for the club's energy policy. One of the most active was the midwest regional conservation committee which was then chaired by George Pring.

Lage: It wasn't really a regional issue it seemed.

Sherwin: It was both, because at this time the various regions were working very closely with the Sierra Club legal eagles--the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund--in regard to the licensing of power plants. There were a lot of problems, one of which was the fact that in certain instances there were conflicts between the attorneys whom the local people had obtained to carry the ball, who sometimes simply could not work with the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund. There were factional problems. By that I mean there were problems in achieving a wholly disciplined assessment of the facts.

If you don't do this, it can be exceedingly embarrassing. For example, as you may or may not know, the executive committee of the Sierra Club is the one which authorizes lawsuits. Once upon a time the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club presented a plan for attacking a housing development down at the Pajaro Dunes. The facts as presented looked as if it was a very good lawsuit, and it turned out that the facts had not been carefully marshalled, with the result that we abandoned the lawsuit that we had once started because it was just something we couldn't support factually. This was always a problem.

Lage: This was a chapter effort?

Sherwin: Yes. [pause] I got into trouble with George Pring later when I was on a visit in St. Louis and then Nashville or in Michigan, I guess. I had promised George something with respect to the action of the executive committee and the legal defense fund in authorizing a certain lawsuit. I don't remember the details now. It may have been that I promised that I would present his point of view to the committee which deferred approving the lawsuit. It may have been that he thought that I had promised that the committee would approve it. I don't know. Either one could be correct, but in any event there was a misunderstanding. I think that it was not approved and that he thought I had betrayed him or whatever. Anyway, where were we? We were talking about the regional conservation committees.

Lage: Right, and their role in the energy policy. You said that George Pring's committee was particularly active.

Sherwin: They were particularly active and particularly thorough in their analysis of the energy problem and in their general proposals for the attitude that the board of directors should take with respect to each segment of these problems. It was very interesting. The product of the midwest regional conservation committee was not too dissimilar to the product from other regional committees, maybe more thorough-going, longer. But by the time they got to the board of directors--and this took many months--they were like an essay, in each case, divided into various categories or chapters. But nowhere was there any effort made by any of the committees to compress the ultimate conclusions into the kind of statement that could be used as a declaration of policy. So when the time came at the board meeting to try to make some preliminary decisions about energy policy, we were all confronted with these reams and masses of papers and no statement that we could debate. I had this much to do with it. I kind of hastily put together my own ideas as to what the ultimate policy of the Sierra Club should be and then I got hold of Will Siri, Larry Moss, and two or three others. I said, "Look, we've got to have something to put before the board. Would you please skip the first part of the board meeting and go work on this and see if you can't come up with something." Which they did. It was debated, talked about, changed a little bit but not much. But that was the first declaration of Sierra Club policy on energy.

Lage: I had in my notes here when these things occurred. I think that was in August '72.

Sherwin: It could be.

Lage: You also had an energy task force that presented something. Do you recall this?

Sherwin: No, not off hand.

Lage: I think it was called Electric Power Task Force.* There was no energy committee, I gather. You didn't have a national committee. There seemed to be a task force that worked out policy and then these various regional conservation committees came in with more.

Sherwin: I just don't remember the task force.

Lage: Were there ideological conflicts, nuclear, say, versus coal?

*See Bancroft Library Sherwin papers, "Power", carton 5.

Sherwin: [pause] My recollection may be all haywire, but my recollection is that there were conflicts developed among members of the board with respect to nuclear policy. But I thought that was after we had first adopted a basic statement having to do with the conservation of energy and things to avoid. But if it's simultaneous, I am subject to correction.

Lage: My impression is--maybe if I give you my impression it will call something back--that any kind of nuclear declaration was avoided because there was conflict. In fact, one of the task forces said the club wouldn't take a position on nuclear [policy] and that would leave the local chapters and groups to take their own position; some would be pro and some would be con.

Sherwin: I do not recollect that it was that explicit. I just thought we went from one to the other and that the evolution of the nuclear policy succeeded the adoption of the basic energy policy. I know that there was eventually a conflict over the nuclear policy, and I can remember that the policy that was adopted was voted by a majority. Those voting no included Will Siri. That was January '74.

Energy Policy Considerations: Conservation, Pollution, Land Use

Lage: Do you remember any discussion--this is mentioned also in your papers--of a controversy over a low growth position, the club taking a position that growth is not good?

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: And also pricing and its effect on the poor, higher energy pricing as a means of conserving.

Sherwin: All of those were discussed. The timing of it I am not sure of.

Lage: I don't think the timing is as important as if you can recall any of the pros and cons.

Sherwin: We all became very much interested in a paper presented by the Denis Meadows team called The Limits To Growth. Shortly thereafter the British produced their Blueprint for Survival, both of these as I recall being sponsored by the Club of Rome which was a very progressive group, including some industrialists and professors and various other people. The material from these reports I used extensively in some of my speeches, such as at the American Petroleum Institute. Are you acquainted with the idea of exponential growth?

Lage: Somewhat; give us a little on that.

Sherwin: You can take any phenomenon and if it is permitted, encouraged, or made to grow like compound interest, you will achieve a growth curve which starts out to look very benign and will go on for a long period of time with very, very gradual increase. But there is something else working. Compound interest always means that there is a doubling time. You can figure out what the doubling time is by dividing the rate into seventy and getting the number of years. For example, if you have ten percent interest it will double in seven years. So eventually you get to the point where the doubling becomes catastrophically large, and it doesn't matter how much you've got down here like oil or coal or whatever. It imposes a limit that because of the fact of the rapidity of the growth and consumption with this huge doubling process, the excess quantities you've got down here are of relatively less and less import.

The implications of this were, number one, that, no matter what, we were going to reach the end of our oil reserves within a calculable period. At first they said twenty years. Then, of course, they did discover more oil so it was a little bit longer than that. Coal looked as if it would last three hundred years plus or minus. Many of the essential metals were in an even more precarious situation--nickel, tungsten, molybdenum, whatnot. All of these if this exponential growth continued appeared to be subject to a certain termination of availability.

So we all got fascinated with this, and we thought we ought to be prudent; we ought to take a look and see if there is some way that we can avoid these catastrophes in the future by conservation, primarily, or by finding substitutes for some of these things which seemed as if they are absolutely necessary. But a lot of people took this with a grain of salt and, of course, those persons associated with industry I think may not have even read the papers and didn't believe them. There were persons on the board who had reservations about it. So, yes, there was a lot of discussion about what the Sierra Club's position should be.

I think that eventually it worked out that, number one, we should concentrate on conservation because even at that early stage it appeared as if this was the source of more potential energy than any other immediately practicable substitute.

Lage: The conservation?

Sherwin: The conservation of energy. The transportation aspect of our economy if I recall correctly--and if I seem to be lecturing I guess I am--absorbs about twenty-five percent of the total energy used in the United States. There are obvious ways that energy can be conserved in transportation such as by having more efficient internal combustion engines, such as by substituting mass transit.

Sherwin: You can say the same thing about commercial and residential dwellings. You can say the same thing through appropriate industrial engineering, about industry which consumes a substantial fraction of the energy consumption.

There isn't an area that you can't achieve more by conservation than by any other means. This is number one. Then number two, of course, we have always been concerned about the effects of the energy sources that you do have to use and consume upon the environment. This is elementary. Anybody knows what the petrochemical industry does to the environment. Of course, most people debate it, but I don't think anybody is a hundred percent comfortable with the idea of supplying all of our needs through nuclear power. Aside from the devastation that this kind of energy production does to the environment, there is the simple matter of the institutional factor that I've talked about.

As long as you have huge production plants that are distributing large quantities of electricity let's say, or whatever, to other places for distribution, you have a huge consumption of land that might better be used for other purposes. I've forgotten exactly what the figures are, but as I recall even eight years ago when I was preaching on this subject, as much space as is occupied by the state of Pennsylvania was at that time over-burdened with power transmission lines. This says nothing about railroads, or slurry through pipes or whatever.

Lage: It sounds as if you made quite a study yourself as a layman.

Sherwin: I found it fascinating. There are some things I haven't delivered to the Bancroft Library which consist of boxes full of speeches that I made and you'll find that, I'm afraid, I was somewhat repititious about this sort of thing.

Nuclear Power: The Institutional Problems

Lage: On the nuclear issue you voted with the majority on the Sierra Club board for a moratorium on nuclear power. How, as a layman, did you come to your conclusion? How did you judge and balance all these factors, especially when people you respected on the board itself were divided?

Sherwin: Of course, I was always aware of the fact that whatever opinions I might reach as a result of studying the technical aspects of nuclear power were concerned were subject to question because I'm neither an engineer nor a nuclear physicist. But, just as in my daily occupation I have to read things on various different kinds of subjects

Sherwin: and form conclusions regardless of whether I'm the most sophisticated person in the world about it or not, I reached certain conclusions about nuclear power. I was convinced that it wasn't all that safe, but I was particularly concerned because, again, I didn't think that our institutions were equipped to deal with the problem. Now, our institutions that I am talking about in this case are private enterprise in a capital intensive industry, where people whose primary concern was money, profits, and growth were supposed to be at that level watching over the safety of the public. This inconsistency in motivation to me spelled potential trouble, and I think that's been borne out time and time again.

Lage: Do you mean the individual power company and the responsibility that they bear?

Sherwin: Correct. If it came to a choice between cutting a corner and using a slightly less qualified material or if it came to a question of whether or not you would run the plant more hours a given day, the motivation I should think would be to fudge. I just think that this is borne out day after day.

Lage: Some of your decisions then came out of your own philosophical viewpoint on how institutions operate?

Sherwin: Yes, that's true--fortified by instances of mendacity on the part of industry. They cover up. You never get the whole truth out of them. Take, for example, that libel suit that Dave Pesonen won against the fellow who was the superintendent of the Humboldt plant. I don't know whether you remember that or not. There was some TV [employee] --I don't remember his precise function with the TV outfit--but anyway, he recorded an interview with a superintendent. He interviewed a superintendent up in the Humboldt plant about something to do with the operation of their nuclear plant. The superintendent told him one thing and then later on claimed that he was misquoted, which is a devastating charge to make against a TV reporter. So the TV reporter sued him for libel. Dave Pesonen represented the fellow, and from the trial jury he won a seven and a half million dollar verdict, which the trial judge thought was excessive and knocked down. On appeal the judgment of liability was upheld but the court remanded the case for retrial of the issue of damage. ##

Not only was I philosophically oriented for many, many reasons to be skeptical of the bona fides of the utility operators, but I had my skepticism fortified by many instances of which I was aware, even in my professional practice, of how large industrial organizations avoid responsibility.

I can illustrate it by something that sounds very simple. There was a time when somebody finally charged the Standard Oil Company with a violation of the fish and games codes by allowing

Sherwin: oil spills at the Richmond [California] long pier. The first time anybody ever really took any action about it, they charged the labor supervisor, who had been responsible for unloading the ship and putting it on the pipelines and whose carelessness had caused a spill, which was a criminal violation of the fish and game code. So before the matter was finally adjudicated in one of the municipal courts in Richmond, the lawyers for the Standard Oil Company went in and suggested that they substitute the Standard Oil Company for the superintendent. Now, it sounds great on the face of it, but the ultimate effect is that you've got nobody to pin down. Then the company got probation with a moderate fine, I think.

After that, I looked just out of curiosity, and I know that I counted at least fifty-two violations of probation that had been reported, but nothing ever happened. The reason nothing ever happened was, what do you do if you are judge? Okay, you fine the Standard Oil another fifty bucks a time instead of putting the supervisor in jail for a couple of days?

Judge and Citizen-Activist: A Conflict of Interest?

Lage: Did anything like this come before your court, or would this be something you would have to disqualify yourself for?

Sherwin: Oh, I wouldn't have to disqualify myself. I don't think it makes much sense just because you are against crime or against misfeasance to disqualify yourself in any particular incident regardless. Let's face it, a judge tries to be as fair and as objective as he can, but there is not a judge alive who doesn't have some predilections in terms of his way of looking at things.

For example, one of my close friends on the bench in Solano County and a fellow who has been loyal to the nth degree as far as my activities are concerned has a knee-jerk reaction pro-establishment. My reaction tends to be skeptical of the establishment. But I think we both come out in ninety-nine percent of the cases exactly the same on the law and the evidence received in a similar case. Neither one of us likes crime. I take a different viewpoint as to what you are going to do about it than he does. He doesn't like to see the environment destroyed or damaged; neither do I. We take a little different approach as to what you are going to do about it.

So I have not found occasion to disqualify myself very often and almost never, as I can recall, on any matter affecting an environmental issue. Now, there was one time -- Every litigant has one shot at a judge. Every litigant can file a preemptory

Sherwin: challenge to any judge at the trail level. It doesn't matter whether he's got a reason or not. He can just peremptorily disqualify him. There was one occasion when I was peremptorily disqualified on a case when somebody felt that because of my association with the environmental movement I might be prejudiced against their case. I don't even remember what the case was. I do remember that it happened because when it does happen it's a kind of a jolt to you.

Lage: You mentioned to me earlier that shortly after you were president of the Sierra Club, the Association of California Judges had more or less said that judges should not take positions such as you had had with the club.

Sherwin: That's right. I suppose that my being a conspicuous officer of the Sierra Club had something to do with it, but the movement was aimed much more broadly than just that. One of the things that they did, which I am sure I had some responsibility for, was to add to the code of ethics a provision to the effect that no judge should be an officer or director of any organization that had lots of litigation in any court. Now, of course, this struck at such things as being a member of the board of trustees of the Boy Scouts or a member of the governing council of a church or anything like that. So it was pretty sweeping.

Lage: Is that in effect now, so that judges are under those constraints?

Sherwin: Yes, that's right. I could never go back to being an officer of the Sierra Club as long as I wanted to be available for assignment as a judge. It was done in a fashion that to me was much more offensive than the mere fact that it happened. The ethics committee of the Association of California Judges, then known as the Conference, actively solicited the membership of the association towards this point of view. The entire bench of Alameda County took exception to certain provisions of the proposed code of ethics. They voted seventeen to one against it and drew up an argument which was a pretty articulately done piece of goods. The executive committee of the conference and the ethics committee refused to circulate it before the election at which the code was adopted. Then one of the persons who had been active on the ethics committee and is still prominently mentioned in Los Angeles County got caught later on with a County of Los Angeles car dove hunting in Arizona.

Lage: That's a wonderful example!

Sherwin: Yes. I really thought that that was much more offensive than my being prominent in the Sierra Club. But, yes, the conference did react, but this was after I had been president of the Sierra Club. This was after I was on the executive committee of the Conference

Sherwin: of California Judges. [laughter]

Lage: That's an interesting side light.

Staff Input on Energy Policy

Lage: I'm not sure we have really drawn together what the decision-making process was on the energy policy. You had input from many sources. You had your own input and then you delegated a team of directors--

Sherwin: And you say we had the task force. Yes, we had all this material that had been available to the members of the board of directors for some time. So most of the members of the board had studied it. There were some exceptions, but they studied it. They were pretty well acquainted with the various issues involved, so the matter of synthesizing it into an acceptable statement that would clearly set forth the Sierra Club's point of view about energy really wasn't all that much of a leap. It simply was a question of synthesizing what had been done by others.

Lage: But it did draw on the different recommendations?

Sherwin: Oh yes, oh yes.

Lage: Was the policy that came out generally acceptable?

Sherwin: Yes. I think some of the people on the board, maybe like Ed Wayburn, were a little bit unhappy about our getting into something which they foresaw would be a rather absorbing subject and one which would bring us into conflict with major powers in the United States.

Lage: But the actual wording of the policy was acceptable?

Sherwin: Right.

Lage: What was the staff input into the energy policy? Do you recall that? As you describe it, it sounds very much a volunteer-directed activity.

Sherwin: I didn't mean to ignore the staff's input. I think that they had position papers on it. I think they had prepared discussions of the different themes presented from the regional conservation committees and, as you say, from this task force. [That's funny--I better go back and take a look at those minutes and maybe we'll have to revise some of this if I refresh my recollection in that respect.]

Lage: As I saw some of the correspondence, it looked like part of the staff's role was prodding the board to make a decision. They

Lage: seemed critical of the fact that it took so long.

Sherwin: It could be. We were being pretty careful, and there was an awful volume of work involved. You've seen some of the RCC reports, I'm sure, in the Bancroft papers, haven't you?

Lage: Yes, it's a tremendous amount of work.

The Call For a Nuclear Moratorium, 1974

Lage: What about when the club in January, 1974, finally did come out taking a position that there should be a nuclear moratorium? Do you recall the response from members and others? Was that a controversial thing?

Sherwin: Yes, but not from many members. There was negative response from some highly visible members. I remember, for example, getting quite a dissertation from Chauncey Starr. He's the chairman of the UCLA Department of Engineering and a very prominent man who is sought after as a lecturer and as a consultant.

For instance, at the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science last January in San Francisco I went to a fascinating panel upon which he was one of the participants. He was at one end of the spectrum along with Frank O'Leary, who was formerly of the Department of Energy and an exponent of nuclear power, and they had Barry Commoner at the other and several people in between. They had Denis Meadows there and some fellow from the Harvard Business School, who was in the middle of the array somewhere. The moderator was a sociologist from the Jet Propulsion Lab at Cal Tech, who made a crack there that made me subsequently get in touch with him, and he participated in our Japanese American Environmental Conference at Stanford this last year and presented a paper that had everybody buzzing. But it was fun.

Anyway, Starr is a man with a good reputation. He thought that the policy that had been adopted by the Sierra Club was nuts. So he wrote me this long letter to explain why, and other people did this also.

Lage: But overall you think that the membership accepted it.

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: I found a memo in your papers from Mike McCloskey, which he wrote

Lage: to the executive committee about six months after the board approved the nuclear moratorium. He seemed to consider the moratorium more of a strategy rather than a principle. I thought that this would be something you would remember because you were quite upset about it and wrote a reply.

Sherwin: I don't at this moment have any recollection of it.

Lage: Okay, maybe I can get that copied because I would be interested in your response.

Sherwin: Let's stop. Do you have all of the minutes. I can get them at Sierra Club, can't I? [tape interruption]

Part of the moratorium that I insisted upon was that we developed institutional devices to insure that these conditions are met.

Lage: So you were bringing in that issue again of the institutional drawbacks.

Sherwin: Correct.

Battling the Corporate Giants, a Club Task?

Lage: The couple of editorials that you wrote for the Bulletin* that got such a big response showed somewhat of a negative attitude toward the large business corporation. Is this part and parcel of the same issue that we're talking about here?

Sherwin: Yes, it is. Is it appropriate to talk about?

Lage: I think so.

Sherwin: Private business enterprises, especially in the United States, have now developed so that they consist, in effect, of governments as well as economic operating units. It's incredible the extent to which the operations of any one of them affect our daily lives--in detail. They are governed by small groups of people to which we append the label generally of "management." Even with respect to the internal operations of the organization, so long as they return the profits--dividends--and grow, stockholders have no control over them.

*"Editorial," Sierra Club Bulletin, May 1971; "Power of Transnational Corporations", Sierra, March/April 1979.

Sherwin: So in my opinion, assuming the premise is correct that they exercise political as well as economic power, it's the antithesis of democracy and is offensive to me for that reason. I think that the premise can be supported even down to the extent of the little cases you see about the question of whether persons can distribute petitions in a shopping center, which has been in the Supreme Court two or three times with mixed results.

It affects what you can do in terms of movement, what you can see. The fact that the corporation is treated as if it were a person gives it huge political power in the elections. For example, look what the tobacco industry is doing with respect to the smoking proposition in this election. They've poured millions of dollars into the campaign, and they have caused the opinion of the public to shift so that it is now quite problematical as to whether that measure--Proposition 10--will pass. It looks bad.

Lage: It is quite a skilled advertising campaign.

Sherwin: Very. So, yes, I react skeptically with respect to the corporation what it seeks to do, and I think that there are certain things that we ought to do with respect to our statutes and the operations of the courts that would curb some of these excessive concentrations of power.

Lage: Were you ever of a mind that the club should take this up as an issue, as a way of dealing with some of our conservation [problems]?

Sherwin: Yes, through the international committee.

Lage: How did that proceed?

Sherwin: It never got off the ground really. Oh, a lot of people expressed interest, but it's a huge subject.

Lage: You would really be battling a giant on that.

Sherwin: Oh, I don't care about that, but what the problem was was time and opportunity in my short lifetime that's remaining to put the thing together. I did write a memorandum on it, but it was just a preliminary memorandum.

Lage: Was this back when you were president?

Sherwin: No, no, this was much later as a member of the international committee.

Lage: What about as president, the couple of editorials? Was this sort of a flyer to see if you would get interest?

Sherwin: No, actually it was sort of a follow-up on one that Phil Berry had written on corporate responsibility. Did you say two editorials?

Lage: I think there was one on oil companies and one on multi-national corporations. Did you find that this was rather shocking to some club members, this idea that maybe the business of the Sierra Club is to take on Business?

Sherwin: Oh, I had a few responses of that nature.

Lage: How did your own feelings or ideas develop? Was this based on things you saw happening as a judge, or was there some reading that influenced you?

Sherwin: Oh, reading. I guess I got interested in this generally as a kid, and perhaps I may have inherited some of this. I'm not sure.

Lage: So some of this skepticism towards large corporations is in your background?

Sherwin: Oh, yes. I suppose it could go back in my memory at least as far as the origins of the controversy between the Department of Water and Power of the City of Los Angeles and the people of Owens Valley and of the Mono Basin over water. It was widely known that the water developments were energized by a relatively small number of self-seeking promoters and that the first benefits of the Los Angeles aqueduct were land promoters in the San Fernando Valley. Some highly devious maneuvering went on, as everybody knew, with respect to that. A man who had been with some federal reclamation exploratory group by the name of Lippencott sold out and became the tool of Los Angeles and in effect--what word can I use as a substitute for one I was about to use that is obscene?--sabotaged the people of Owens Valley. A mayor of Los Angeles by the name of Henry Eaton, thinking that Los Angeles would have to build a reservoir where they now have a reservoir in Long Valley called Crowley Lake, bought up Long Valley at a song thinking he would hold up the city of Los Angeles for vast quantities of money. So they abandoned that until Eaton finally was out of Long Valley. All kinds of dirty things go on in any project like that.

Lage: So these were things that you absorbed from your boyhood in Owens Valley.

Sherwin: Yes, and you see it everywhere. Look who is the big power behind the matter of the Peripheral Canal and the further transportation of water down the valley. The people of Los Angeles are not really concerned. It's Kern County Land and Cattle Company, which is a subsidiary of Tenneco West which is a subsidiary of Tenneco, which is a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific Railway. They are the

Sherwin: promoters of this, along with the contractors who would stand to gain by building the physical facilities.

Lage: And they are not responsible to people in a democratic way.

Sherwin: No.

Lage: Okay, I knew this would all tie back to our discussion of your boyhood--our first session! [laughter] ##

V BUILDING AN INTERNATIONAL ROLE FOR THE SIERRA CLUB

[Interview 4: April 22, 1981]##

The Early Work of the International Committee: Al Forsyth and Nick Robinson

Lage: Let's start out talking about the international program. The club had shown some reluctance in '69 when Dave Brower wanted to get into the international arena, and in '71, I guess you appointed the first international committee. Do you remember how the decision was made to get into this area?

Sherwin: I don't think it was all that abrupt. We had had an international committee in the sense of Al Forsyth's committee that dealt with the problems of how to deal with Sierra Club groups in foreign nations. They did a lot of work in this area, and it eventually evolved into the admission of the groups in Western Canada into one Western Canadian chapter of the Sierra Club. Then later on a chapter was also formed in Ontario.

The major problems that we tried to deal with were the questions of an organization which is organized under the laws of a separate nation committing itself to a prior obligation to the Sierra Club and its policies, and whether or not there might be some kind of a conflict with the laws under which they were organized and the laws of the Sierra Club.

The second major concern--Let me back up just a moment. Suppose, for example, that a foreign nation chapter embarked upon a policy inconsistent with the basic policy of the Sierra Club: What could we do about it? Okay, that's one major area of concern. Another one was the fact that we were beginning to realize how valuable the Sierra Club name was, and we wanted to maintain control of the Sierra Club name and not have people running off purporting to represent the Sierra Club who are departing from the Sierra Club policy or simply dissipating the value of the Sierra Club name.

Sherwin: But under Al Forsyth's committee those matters were pretty well worked out, which, as I have already stated, resulted in the admission of the Western Canadian chapter and the Ontario chapter.

But all of this had very little to do with an entity of the Sierra Club promoting Sierra Club policies internationally. We were all, I think, imbued with the reality that everything is connected to everything else. I guess you could quote Darwin and John Muir and a half a dozen other imminent scientists to that effect, and we thought that the Sierra Club had some ideas that could well stand promotion internationally.

I think that most everybody in the club had come around to the viewpoint that we ought to be doing something internationally by the time we finally established an international conservation committee.

Lage: That wasn't a controversial matter?

Sherwin: I don't recall that it was. I think that earlier it had been because of a fear on the part of some members of the board that we were overstretching ourselves. We were getting into more things than we could digest and handle. But I think that had gradually disappeared, and I think that Phil Berry's leadership in embarking upon survival matters had caused a change in the attitude of those who hadn't been convinced before.

The committee was established, and it started making inroads into the nongovernmental organizations that clustered around the United Nations headquarters in New York. But the event, I think that gave greater impetus to it than any other single thing was the Stockholm conference on the environment. A number of our people attended the conference.

Lage: Was that a United Nations conference.

Sherwin: Yes, in Stockholm. [United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, June 5-16, 1972] Ed Wayburn, Nick Robinson, I think Mike McCloskey was there. I don't recall how many others, but those who went were active in the caucuses and lobbying that went on among the non-governmental organizations and came back imbued with the idea that the Sierra Club had an opportunity to take the leadership among non-governmental organizations in the international arena.

Lage: Was the club an official delegate to this conference or was that not the setup? Were people invited to it?

Sherwin: [pause] I don't think I can answer that question. I'm not sure, but I think we were recognized as officially one of the nongovernmental organizations that was invited to attend the conference. I'm not a hundred percent certain.

I should give credit where credit is due. Individual members of the Sierra Club had been active on the international scene long before this. The major example is Dick Leonard. He and his wife Doris had visited most of the areas around the world in which parks had been established and were friends of the park officials and conservationists all over the world. Also, I think Dick had been active in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Then Dick and Doris had been active in the effort to establish an international park [Arctic international wildlife range] crossing the Canadian and the United States borders and which culminated in a conference at Whitehorse [Canada, October 1970].

Lage: How about Nick [Nicholas] Robinson? I think you mentioned in the earlier session that you had kind of found Nick Robinson.

Sherwin: Okay, I think he was recommended to me by Al Forsyth because of Nick's activities in the Atlantic chapter.

Lage: Somehow I got the impression that Nick kind of came to the board with the idea for an international committee and a program for it, but is that not the way it worked?

Sherwin: Well, afterwards he did. It took hardly any time at all after he was chairman before he did come to the board with a proposed set of guidelines for the international committee and a program.

Lage: So he really took hold of it?

Sherwin: Oh, indeed. I don't know whether you remember or not, but in one of our interviews I talked about Dick Sill's activity with the council and his idea of democratic participation by more people and about how I gave him a job but it just didn't turn out that he, when saddled with the responsibility, had the initiative to go ahead. If it hadn't been something he dreamed up first, he wouldn't do it. But Nick is a different personality altogether. Once you gave him the ball, he carried it far beyond any possible expectations.

Lage: Had he had an interest in international conservation?

Sherwin: I think he must have had because by the time I became acquainted with him, he had all of the vocabulary of a person [chuckles] interested in international affairs!

Janet Sherwin: Yes, Nick had an interest in every blessed thing on the face of this earth that one could be interested in.

Sherwin: Yes, Nick was a very broadly interested person. Nick is an amazing person. I don't know whether you know him at all personally.

Lage: Just on the phone; I've had a couple of talks with him.

Sherwin: He is a member of the local symphony orchestra. He plays the viola. He is a poet. When he sends you a Christmas card, it will have one of his own poems and Shelly's, his wife, etchings which are beautiful.

Lage: Tell me more about Nick. I think that's appropriate.

Sherwin: He was very active in conservation work in New York. He became appointed by Governor Carey to be chairman of the appeals board that oversaw wetlands problems which was a piece of legislation that Nick had a great deal to do with fashioning in the first place. When he was in school, he was one of the editors of the Columbia Law Review and thereafter, he himself established a law review in Holland (the Netherlands) of which he is still editor, and it publishes articles on international legal things.

Lage: How interesting. How did he pick the Netherlands? Does he have a tie there?

Sherwin: I don't know why the Netherlands. Anyway, it was interesting to me that here he would be an editor of a foreign law review! [laughs]

J. Sherwin: He has been to Russia several times on behalf of either the Sierra Club or some other group. When he gets into something he really gets involved. I was the secretary of the international committee for three years, and when I would go to New York, I'd stay with him-- a real pleasure.

Sherwin: Anyway, Nick took hold and then not very long after that he conceived of the idea of a staff representative of the Sierra Club close to the United Nations and worked out ways of financing it through grants that wouldn't be available otherwise to support the staff. The staff became Patricia Rambach [hired March 1972], now Patricia Scharlin, who very neatly began to work with the United Nations organizations, the nongovernmental organizations around the United Nations headquarters in New York, and also became involved in the organization of specific projects of a number of different kinds.

For instance, she was one of the organizers of the Caribbean conference on various matters affecting the islands and the shores of the Caribbean Sea. She also reached out to various persons who undertook specific projects in the name of the Sierra Club, but

Sherwin: which were funded by other grants. One that I remember vividly was Professor Larry Hamilton from Cornell. He undertook a study of the tropical forests in Venezuela, and he came up with such a fine piece of work that it was translated into Spanish and became one of the basic documents that the government of Venezuela dealt with in establishing a park in Venezuela that was representative of the tropical forests.

Lage: Now, was this under the auspices of the Sierra Club?

Sherwin: Yes, yes.

Lage: It's interesting how one project gets chosen rather than another. There must be thousands of worthy projects.

Sherwin: Yes. Do you recall that at one time when we were talking about the efforts of the Sierra Club to set up a schedule of priorities and I made the comment, which may have sounded a little skeptical and probably was, that it's a matter of serendipity and having the right person there at the right time. That can often determine priority, where as if you looked at it abstractly, whether it would be entitled to priority or not is debatable.

Lage: When you have a talented person--

Sherwin: If you find a talented person, give them the wherewithal to go ahead, and then you get something.

Lage: Would this have been funded through a grant, do you suppose, rather than by the Sierra Club's general funds.

Sherwin: Yes, it would have been funded by a grant.

J. Sherwin: That's what New York office spent most of its time doing--raising money--and Nick was very good at that, too.

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: Are there any other things about the international committee? You served on it. I think we should note that, and Janet served too.

Sherwin: That's right. We were members of the committee for quite a long while. Long after the time I was president, we participated in the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements ["Habitat" Conference] in Vancouver and Washington in cooperation with the Western Canada chapter [1976].

Lage: You were part of the delegation to that Human Habitat Conference?

Sherwin: Right.

Lage: I guess that wasn't clear from your records, I remember. I couldn't quite be certain if you had gone or just had all of the--

Sherwin: Oh, yes, there were I would guess almost a dozen of us there--Ted Trzyna, Nick Robinson, Pat Rambach. A number of people from the Western Canadian chapter participated actively.

Lage: That was an international conference as well?

Sherwin: Correct.

Lage: On "human habitat"--were they thinking about cities or were they thinking about the environment in total, as part of the human habitat?

Sherwin: They were more concentrated on problems related to urban areas.
[pause]

Earthcare, 1975, an International Wilderness Conference

Sherwin: Whatever the time sequence was, there was also this international wilderness conference that we put on in New York in 1975. [Earthcare, the Fourteenth Biennial Wilderness Conference, June 1975] I had been talking with Nick and twisting his arm for some time to undertake such a conference as chairman. He in a sense acquiesced and coined a new word for his own function as "convener" of the conference, but for reasons which have never been clear to me, he deferred the chairmanship to Elvis Starr, who was the president of the Audubon Society, and me, as a former president of the Sierra Club.

I think it was a very successful conference. It involved people from the Third World as well as people from the United Nations per se.

Lage: What was the intention? At conferences you usually think of reading papers, but I'm sure a lot of it takes place on the side, getting together with others.

Sherwin: Like the wilderness conferences that the Sierra Club formerly put on in San Francisco, the basic purpose of it was to reach the public rather than to be talking to ourselves. So consequently the invited speakers were world figures, including the very charming head of the park system in Nairobi, friends of the Leonards; Russell Peterson,

Sherwin: who was at that time no longer governor of the state, but I don't think he had taken on any other official capacity yet. There was the other Peterson--

J. Sherwin: Roger Tory.

Sherwin: Roger Tory Peterson, the composer of the bird books.

Lage: Russell Peterson was governor of--

Sherwin: He had been governor of what, New Jersey?

J. Sherwin: He was with CEQ [Council on Environmental Quality] then, was he or was he? Yes, he was with CEQ at that time.

Sherwin: Rene DuBois. Anyway, the idea was to attract public attention to the conservation problems, not only among the people attending there, but by the news about the conference to try to reach the public. It wasn't like the United Nations' conferences where as you indicated, a lot of the business is done by breakfasts and such with other people who are involved.

Lage: So communication among the delegates wasn't a major activity.

J. Sherwin: There was no time. The program was so packed full that there was no time. There were two things going on at the same time for three days, and you just had to really pick which ones you would want to hear. So I don't think they had time, and some of them just came for a day and they would come just for the one day they were performing and didn't stay. I think the ones from Africa and Asia and places like that did stay for the whole conference.

Sherwin: Oh, yes.

J. Sherwin: It was at that dinner that Raymond gave the Muir Award to Justice Douglas.

Lage: Oh, yes, the John Muir Award. That must have been a thrill.

Sherwin: Oh! It was a thrill, and it was also a major concern because he was in a wheelchair and physically very delicate. His mind would work just as rapidly as ever, which was very frustrating to him because he couldn't talk.

Lage: But you felt he was "with it"?

Sherwin: Oh, yes. Well, he did talk, but I mean it was a matter almost of like your interview with me--a word now and then another word ten minutes after!

Lage: Well, I hadn't noticed that! [laughter] Wait until you read the transcript and you'll disagree with that!

U.S. Environmental Delegation to the Soviet Union, 1972

Sherwin: Okay, let's back up now to 1972 and talk about our trip to Moscow [September 1972].*

Lage: Right, I think that's one of our major subjects here. How did it all start? As I saw the records, you were one of two representatives of environmental groups.

Sherwin: Yes, although I'm not sure that we were the only two invited. It all started as far as I was concerned when I happened to be in recess from court and was sitting in my chambers and there came a telephone call from Russell Train asking me if my wife and I would like to join the delegation to Moscow to work out the details of the president's agreement with [Soviet President Nikolai V.] Podgorny about cooperation in solving environmental problems. [Agreement of Cooperation in Field of Environmental Protection, May 1972]

Lage: Did you know Russell Train?

Sherwin: No.

Lage: He was just calling you as representative of the Sierra Club as president?

Sherwin: Right, I didn't know him then. I knew him afterwards quite well. So it was naturally astounding, and I couldn't answer at the time. It was really very difficult to know exactly what to do because Janet's father had just died. I was in the dilemma of not wanting to further upset everybody in the family with something like this. On the other hand, it was a situation where I felt that she might have been unhappy afterwards if I hadn't at least discussed with her an opportunity that just doesn't occur. So I broached it to her, and we decided to go.

So just a very, very few days later, we met most of the rest of the delegation at the airport in New York.

*See Raymond Sherwin papers, Carton 5, Bancroft Library.

Lage: It doesn't sound as if they gave you much advance notice.

Sherwin: Oh, none.

J. Sherwin: It was exactly a week. Remember, you came down on Friday night from Fairfield. I was with my mother and when we got my sister to come and take care of my mother, we started in Sunday trying to get me a passport because I had never had one. He had one.

Sherwin: Passport and visa.

J. Sherwin: Well, we got it, but boy, we didn't have our visa until we got on the plane, and it was underway for London. Then some lady comes down and says, "Are you Judge Sherwin?" [laughs]

Lage: Why such a strange type of arrangement? It wasn't a last minute trip, was it? I would think you would have months of pre-knowledge?

Sherwin: I really don't know. I do know that Judge Train's purpose in inviting us was that he wanted to display us to the Russians as representatives of the private sector and to demonstrate to the Russians what considerable effect the works of private organizations could have on government in the United States. So Tom Kimball, the executive director of the National Wildlife Federation, and I made the trip. Now, I don't know whether any other conservation organizations' representatives were invited or not. I would be rather surprised if the Audubon Society hadn't been invited to send a representative.

Anyway, we met some of the other members of the delegation on the airplane. What happened was that Train was the chairman and most of the other departments were represented by whatever assistant secretary of the department happened to be involved in environmental aspects of their responsibility. There was Harry Fingers from HUD, Christian Herter from State, John Larson from Interior--

J. Sherwin: The biologist that we've heard other places and his cute wife, they were both biologists. Who were they?

Sherwin: John Quarles?

J. Sherwin: No, the famous biologist. He's written a lot. We've heard him speak at the wilderness conference.

Sherwin: Lee Talbot. He was the official scientific advisor to the president.

J. Sherwin: And Shirley Temple!

Sherwin: And Shirley Temple.

Lage: So you had the whole range of governmental activity. The club didn't have the "in" in Washington that it seems to have now, am I correct? It didn't have the connections that it had, at least during the Carter administration. So were these new contracts you were making?

Sherwin: I don't know. That's a question that has a lot of nuances. We had had a Washington representative in the person of a man who was well liked in Congress. I don't know the extent of his relationship with the agencies.

Lage: And the Nixon administration?

Sherwin: Yes, it may be a little out of chronological sequence here, but some time after we had returned from Russia, and Janet and I had occasion to know in advance that we were going to Washington D. C., I had called up Russ Trains' secretary and told her we were going to be there and asked if it would be possible to arrange a sort of a no-host reunion, which was done and practically everybody who had been to Russia was there. It was a marvelous afternoon, just a lot of fun. At that time, I had the opportunity to introduce Brock Evans and a couple of other representatives of the Sierra Club from our Washington Office to all of these people. So it may have had the effect of opening doors which hadn't been open before. But I can't say that the former representative of the Sierra Club in Washington, Lloyd Tupling, didn't have some entree into these offices before that. Anyway, we arrived in Moscow and had a quick trip through the customs. We had a rather scary trip from the airport into the hotel where we were staying in Moscow. They drive like mad almost like in Mexico City! [laughter] We were put up at the Hotel Russia [pronounced rū'sēě], which was a huge hotel. ##

I think it has 6,000 rooms, 3,000 of which are allocated to foreigners and 3,000 are reserved for people visiting from various parts of Russia. The very next day, we started our proceedings in the building that had been the trades union building in Moscow, which was equipped with the horse-shoe table, the simultaneous translations.

When we started going over the areas which had previously been agreed upon as subjects for conservation--there were eleven of them that ranged from the question of establishing parks to pollution--most of the same kinds of things with which we were concerned here in the United States.

Lage: Were there efforts to come to agreement or were these just exchanging views?

Sherwin: No, no, efforts to come to agreements for the establishment of more

Sherwin: permanent entities in each of our nations to work on these problems and cooperate with exchanging information and scientific data and practical devices for making things work. The women were excluded from these conferences, God knows why, because I don't know of anything that was secret that was discussed there. [laughs] We would always have a little meeting before each session in a room that was enclosed in fiberglass stuff that was supposed to eliminate the possibility of being bugged, and again I don't really understand why because I can't remember a single thing that was said during the entire conference that as far as I am concerned could not have been cheerfully divulged to the Russians. But that's the way it was done.

Meanwhile, the gals had a chance to go around to various parts of Moscow that we didn't see and saw some most interesting things.

Environmental Protection in the Soviet Private Sector

Lage: You were meeting with the counterparts of these officials in Russia, I assume.

Sherwin: Well, I'm not sure that you would say they were exactly counterparts but people that had that particular responsibility in their bailiwick. One day it was arranged so that I was excused from one of these conferences so that Tom Kimball and Shirley and I could meet with the person who was supposed to be our counterpart, the president of the All Soviet Union Society for the Protection of Nature. It has a few more words in it, but that's it in essence. We had a most interesting afternoon. We must have talked with this person for hours, meanwhile being served these horrible soft drinks that they make in Russia that are in effect carbonated water very lightly flavored with some kind of fruit juice or something, served warm! [laughter]

Lage: But they didn't serve you vodka?

Sherwin: No, no, no!

Lage: Do you recall something from those meetings?

Sherwin: Yes, during our discussion with the president of this All Soviet Union, there were all kinds of things discussed as to what they did--like sponsored efforts by organizations similar to our Boy Scouts in reforesting areas, or he used the example of a place where they had cut a canal and all these youngsters were stimulated to plant the sides of the banks of this canal so that there would

Sherwin: be less erosion.

But finally, we got to pressing him about just how much effect this organization could have on national policy. First, I should say, however, that the organization had about thirty million members, and I'm not sure how voluntary it was. But they did collect dues from thirty million members all over the Soviet Union. about half of whom came from Russia itself.

But we kept pressing him on the question of just what effect the organization had on government decision making. According to him, they could take an issue all the way to top and maybe win, maybe lose. Specifically I asked him, for example, suppose that one of the other departments felt that a road was necessary from Point A to Point B and that the most efficient, economical way of building the road would be to put it through a proposed forest park, and your organization objected. Now, what would happen?

So then he detailed how it would go from one organization to another and possibly even right to the top. The way he put it, it was quite convincing. I have never been a hundred percent sure that he was right.

Lage: But he did portray the idea that it was a separate group that could influence decision making.

Sherwin: Yes, that's the idea; right. Back to the conferences themselves, sometimes one of our members would make a presentation about something and then the Russians would respond. Often they would bring in people who were not necessarily members of the conference itself to read papers to us on that specific subject. But eventually, mostly Russ Train and his counterpart who was the head of the Russian Hydrometeorology Institute. His name was Federov, a very charming fellow. I think my impression is that what happened was that Russ would sum up our position, Federov would sum up their position, and they'd come together on an agreement which was the ultimate product of the last day of the meeting.

Lage: Was there any area that seemed to be one of conflict or were things pretty smooth?

Sherwin: Things were really quite smooth. I came away with the feeling that at least those people who were the official representatives of the conference were just as concerned about conservation matters and environmental questions generally as we were. They were very proud of the water purification system that they had developed in the city of Moscow. They made a play of drinking the water after it had been through the system, even though it had come in as sewage.

Sherwin: We were supposed to have gone with the Trains and some others on a side trip to Siberia. The Russians wanted to show the work that they had done to control the pollution of Lake Baykal and we were supposed to have gone to Irkutsk and another city there. But the way it worked out, it was delayed, and we also found out that we were supposed to spend about five hundred bucks apiece for airplane reservations.

Janet was getting pretty exhausted by this time, and I had to get back to work, so I think we made the Trains a little bit angry about it. But we finally backed out of that and came home with the Larsons. There were several of them that went to Lenin-grad with us.

Lage: Are there any unofficial observations that you might not have made in speeches or reports that you would want to say? It sounds like there wasn't too much meaty conflict.

Sherwin: No.

Lage: Did you come back feeling that there was a lot of hope for cooperation?

Sherwin: Yes, yes, I may be naive, but I thought there was. I think when you get on a person-to-person basis you come away with quite different impressions than if you're stuck with the official positions.

The Sierra Club and the Nixon Administration

Lage: What about your personal chances to confer with Nixon administration officials during the trip? Did you develop a relationship with them?

Sherwin: We became quite friendly with a number of people. We haven't maintained that association. But, for example, I mentioned earlier that we arranged to have a reunion. The fact that we were going to be there became known to Christian Herter, the assistant secretary of state for environmental matters. He invited us to their home for dinner where we met Maurice Strong, the secretary general of the environmental unit of the United Nations. Also present were Senator Howard Baker and his wife and Shirley Temple Black, and the Herters were charming hosts and hostesses.

Lage: Was his main job as assistant for environmental affairs in the State Department?

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: Had the club much interaction with him before?

Sherwin: No, I don't think so. As far as I know, there had been none. Now, since then I think there has been quite a change. For example, one of the members of the Sierra Club's international committee was a fellow who had retired from the state department by the name of Robert Blake. He and Russell Train at one time at least, and for a considerable period of time, I think, tried to work out a modus operandi to smooth the path of consideration of environmental matters in the state department. This went on, I think, for months, and I'm not sure what the ultimate result was. It would be interesting if we had the occasion or opportunity to talk to Bob Blake and find out what happened about it. I think he's still a member of the international committee. I'm not sure.

Lage: Did you get a sense of the Nixon administration and its commitment to environmental questions through this trip?

Sherwin: [pause] I wouldn't say through this trip because the scope of the agenda for the trip was limited to the question of carrying out in a practical way the general agreements that Nixon had made with Podgorny. So I don't think you can answer that question on the basis of this trip. I think you have to take the commitment of the Nixon Administration to environmental matters with a considerable grain of salt--witness Alaska, oh, all kinds of things.

Lage: Look at the record.

Sherwin: Yes, correct.

Lage: To me, the way the club has so much input it seemed--or not so much input, but so much open door to the Carter administration, people being able to call up and make their needs known--was unusual. It was kind of a first. Now, am I correct with that?

Sherwin: No, no, I wouldn't say so. There had been no reason for hesitating, if there was some specific thing upon which the Sierra Club wanted information or maybe to advance an argument, for my not calling any of these fellows up or writing them a letter. I don't recall having an occasion to do so though.

Lage: You did participate in a state department forum a few years after that.

Sherwin: Yes, and I would say that that was insulated from any prior influence that we may have had through this trip or any other way. My impression of these state department forums, and there were at least two

Sherwin: of them that I can remember, was that we were politely ignored. The state department established these forums in, oh, half a dozen cities throughout the United States--[tape interruption for telephone call]

Sidetrip to Leningrad

Sherwin: Let me relate an incident that had happened to us on the way home. After having decided that we would not go to Siberia, we joined John Larson and Lee Talbot, I guess, and some others on this little sidewise way home by way of Leningrad and Copenhagen and London.

By the time we got to Leningrad, Janet and I, being probably the oldest people in the group, were tired. So when they all decided they were going out to dinner--I forget whether this was the first night we were there, I guess it was--

J. Sherwin: The only night we were there!

Sherwin: The only night we were there, Janet and I decided we would find some food on our own account. By this time we had learned that the same word applies to an eating establishment in Russia as it does the United States, namely "restaurant." But in a Russian spelling, it looks like pectobah. So Janet and I wandered down the main drag, the Neva I think, and we saw this word at one place and we popped in there, and that wasn't what we were looking for. It looked like a fast food joint in the United States. So the next one we saw, however, looked as if it were the kind of thing we were looking for. We entered and the restaurant was upstairs. So we walked upstairs and were relieved of our coats, which is the first thing that happens to you whenever you enter any building in Russia. They always take your coat. You can't hang onto it; they won't let you!

We tried to find somebody who spoke English, and there wasn't anybody there. But they took us in and put us at a table anyway and then [chuckles] tried to work out trying to take our order. We were at a table with some people who had been there for some time obviously and were drunk and eating their dessert [laughs] mostly by lying on it!

The waiter came up to our table, and we tried to talk with him, and we were obviously baffled. So the leader of the orchestra came down to the table to see if he could help out. Well, the leader of the orchestra didn't speak English, but he spoke German. Janet and I had both had enough experience with music to know just a tiny bit of German. So finally, we thought we ordered what was

Sherwin: a soup and chicken Kiev. When the order came it turned out to be about half a chicken resting in a bowl of broth, and it was delicious. Afterwards, Janet had a sweet. Then because of the kindness of the orchestra leader, Janet and I decided that the least we could do is to dance one tune around the dance floor.

We got up to start to dance and very shortly the orchestra ceased what they were playing and broke into "Auld Lang Syne", and everybody else except Janet and I left the dance floor! [laughter] So we danced and then went back to the table and paid the check, which was the equivalent of \$2.65 and then left! But we'll never forget that evening. Everybody was so anxious to be kind to us.

J. Sherwin: When we sat down they clapped and clapped and we aren't that good waltzers.

Lage: I imagine not too many people just wander off like that unless they live there as journalists or something.

J. Sherwin: The funny part about it was we were in a lousy hotel, but we went down to the dining room there, and there were all sorts of empty tables and we asked for a menu. "Oh, too late, too late!" It was about a quarter of seven or something like that. Then during the night or during the stay in that room I never could figure out why he was always rushing to turn the light on in the bathroom for me.

Sherwin: Before she went in. Can you possibly guess why?

Lage: No.

Sherwin: Well, you turn the light on, and all the cockroaches would scurry to the drain! [laughter] So by the time Janet got there, they were all down the drain!

J. Sherwin: But I will say one thing for Russia. It had the most marvelous, great, huge bathtubs with unlimited amounts of hot water and, oh, that felt so good.

Sherwin: The towels were on racks that are on pipes.

J. Sherwin: On heated racks; they have them in Denmark.

Sherwin: Oh, there are lots of things about Russia that we enjoyed very much, but I must admit that we had a sort of an unconscious sense of relief when we reached Copenhagen. I don't know why.

J. Sherwin: Yes, we did. Well, because enough things had happened like somebody getting the wrong passport and then having to go back and then there

J. Sherwin: were always people with guns around somewhere.

Lage: We carry a lot of baggage ourselves, a lot of preconceptions that just can't leave us.

J. Sherwin: Yes, that's right. Well, we were delighted in those days with the peasant--not the peasant, but the average man on the street. He was a charming person who smiled at you, and on Friday night or in the evening he was going home with one flower in his hands to take home and I just didn't see anything at all--

Sherwin: The city is immaculate because there are little old ladies out there with straw brooms brushing the dust off of the streets.

J. Sherwin: But there just isn't--For instance, they said that all of the rooms were bugged in the [Hotel] Russia, so that really set me off. I decided if three thousand rooms are bugged, it would take them a long time to get to me! [laughter] So I said everything I wanted to say.

Sherwin: Oh, she just let loose. There was another very pleasant little incident that happened while we were there. We were on the eighth floor of this Hotel Russia, and we went up to our room one evening in the elevator, opened the elevator doors, and here was Johnny Molinari, the associate justice of the appellate court, and his wife!

Lage: That was a kind of serendipity.

Sherwin: Okay, that about covers that, doesn't it?

Lage: Yes, I think so.

J. Sherwin: Oh, Raymond, you did have one further conference in London. You and John went to talk to somebody in the English government.

Sherwin: Oh, that's right. On the way home, I went with John Larson, who had an appointment with his counterpart in the English government. I have learned some very interesting differences between the way they approach matters there and the way we do it here. In the United States, if we wanted to try to find out something or if we wanted to criticize an agency, we would go to the agency directly and make our inquiries and investigations and sometimes expect results. In England, all of the agencies are under an official who is a member of parliament. So instead of making your inquiry at the agency level, you would go through the representative in the parliament who might or might not put the question to the minister in the parliamentary process. That wasn't the sole subject

Sherwin: of the conversations, but for some reason or other it is the one that fascinated me and that I remember the best.

Japanese-American Environmental Conferences, 1978 and 1980

Sherwin: The next item you have on this outline is the Japanese-American conferences. The main architect of these two conferences, especially the first one, from our point of view is Tony Look. Do you know him?

Lage: I don't know him. I know his name and some of what he does.

Sherwin: A first class citizen. He has led outings to Japan for years and has made friends with a number of people in Japan associated with various organizations which are not like our Sierra Club, but which are interested in conservation and environmental matters, such as the Japanese Alpine Club, a number of local organizations of that nature.

So I'm sure that it was Tony's idea that we would establish these conferences.

Lage: Did the international committee arrange the conferences or was Tony a member of the international committee?

Sherwin: I think he was active with the international committee, although I am not sure whether he was a member or not. But anyway, the international committee became interested, as did some people from the Bay Area chapter like Mark Palmer. Mark has been the chairman of the Bay Area chapter and is a young person, a biologist.

It was Tony's idea primarily, I think, that through his friendship we would arrange to have an environmental conference in Japan. I had never been to Japan except briefly on our way to Nepal in 1968, and so I felt as if I had very little to contribute to it, but Tony seemed to think that my occupation would add something to the ability of our representatives to communicate. So I went along. The first of these was in Yokahama in 1978.

Lage: What were the main concerns? Was whaling one of the main concerns?

Sherwin: This was a very touchy subject because dealing with the Japanese you in an entirely new environment as far as communications are concerned. You have to be very careful about not interrupting any other possibility by embarking on a subject that's unhappy with them. So we had not put the whaling business on the agenda to

Sherwin: start off with. Actually, the way it happened it sort of evolved at that first conference that they did discuss whaling. Fortunately some of our people were prepared, and the session came out very well. As I understand it, that was done at the instance of the Japanese.

We talked about nuclear power. We talked about the control of pollution, especially that kind of pollution that is very conspicuous in producing disease, such as mercury and what's the name of that disease--

J. Sherwin: Minamata disease.

Sherwin: Minamata disease, right. The same thing happens with other kinds of metals and chemicals that get into the water. We spent a good deal of time in a most interesting discussion of the various approaches to these problems. It is indeed quite different in Japan than it is in the United States. In the United States, if we want to stop an agency from doing something that we think is unlawful, we sue them and are often successful. In Japan it is a slow moving process where because of their industrial organization, it starts with people of the grassroots level talking with government and industry. Maybe the government will put the needle to industry and maybe it won't but if it does and then the industry fails to cooperate as the governmental people involved in that particular kind of product would desire, it could wind up in a lawsuit by the government against the industry to compel them to comply.

They are very proud of four major lawsuits of this nature that have gone to the Japanese Supreme Court and have resulted in relief for the people affected by these pollution practices.

But the discussion of the institutional and person-to-person relationships and their differences from what we have in this country were fascinating. I can't give you much detail at this time, but they were remarkably different.

Lage: Was the idea again an exchange of views, a coming together with common problems?

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: Was there a sense of one country aiding the other country?

Sherwin: We thought we had things to learn from them, and I'm sure we still do and vice versa.

Lage: Were there any areas other than the whaling where things were tense or where different points of view occurred?

Sherwin: I would say the area that was closest to that would be the nuclear industry and its potential for havoc. Oh, there were some side fusses. For example, Dave [Brower] was a prominent speaker at this conference, but the local representatives of FOE [Friends of the Earth] were not invited to the conference. They were excluded by the Japanese deliberately, and the reason was that they had picketed the new airport that had been constructed over their objections. ##

Eventually, the Japanese went along with the idea of their being able to be present in the balcony of the meeting room where we were holding these sessions, but they were not supposed to speak.

Lage: These were the Japanese organizers, not the government?

Sherwin: The Japanese organizers; some of them were the government.

Lage: So FOE was not a part of the group, a part of the establishment?

Sherwin: Well, Dave was represented but not their Japanese representatives. Afterwards, the Japanese representatives of FOE and some others did have a news conference and came out with some observations that were a little more vivid and not quite consistent with all of the public statements that came out of our conference.

The Japanese were most hospitable to us. We were guests at dinner practically every night, and we had some very warm meetings with them.

Lage: Janet mentioned that one of the goals was maybe to get a participatory environmental movement going in Japan.

Sherwin: Yes, we thought that the conference might tend to stimulate the formation or evolution of an organization similar to the Sierra Club. They do have a number of organizations but it's not a cohesive thing in Japan. They will have an organization in one city that is bent on preserving a local park or an organization some place else that is bent on saving certain wildlife. There are a myriad of these throughout the country as I understand it, and some of the people who represented these local organizations spoke at the conference. But they just don't have anything in the way of an umbrella conservation organization that is in any way similar to the Sierra Club.

Lage: Are they interested in forming one, some of the leadership, or is

Lage: this more our idea of something they should do?

Sherwin: I think the latter. [pause] I think the latter. I'm not sure how much headway we made in advancing the thesis that it would be wise for the Japanese to attempt to form such an organization. It's a little bit subtle, but I think one of the reasons is that they don't approach a serious conservation problem by way of confrontation. They approach it by way of the example of the way their industry is organized where if the Japanese want to get ahead in some industrial product, and if it's the kind of thing that the government approves, the government will participate with the industry in making sure that they have financing, in making sure that they get the appropriate tax breaks and all that kind of thing. It's a much more cooperative way of doing things. They don't have the same kind of labor strife we have in this country.

Lage: But they do have the group, I guess, represented by their FOE-- people who are on the fringe--

Sherwin: That's a very tiny aspect of their social organization so that I think the Sierra Club's way of doing things would be something of a shock to most Japanese.

We reciprocated with a conference in the United States. It began at Stanford University and then recessed to San Diego. I think it was quite successful.

Lage: Do you recall when that was?

Sherwin: Just last year, 1980. We took them from Stanford by bus to Yosemite and then over to Mammoth Lakes and in the Mammoth Lakes area we had the side trip to Mono Lake which, as you know, is one of our major concerns now. But we also had a lecture on the fascinating geological discoveries that are being made around the Mammoth Lakes area.

Lage: You must have then had a hand in organizing this part of it.

Sherwin: I did, yes. I ramrodded this part of it.

Lage: Was Tony Look involved in this one also?

Sherwin: Oh yes, very much so--Tony Look, Wheaton Smith--oh, why can't I remember the names?

J. Sherwin: John Day.

Lage: Did the whaling issue come up in that conference or is this something

Lage: that was on the fringes and never surfaces. I think Tony Look had been upset that the boycott of Japanese products would interfere with the relationship you were developing.

Sherwin: Okay, well, meanwhile--and I take some personal credit for this also--I have always been opposed to the boycott. If you will notice from the minutes from the very beginning, I had opposed the boycott for a number of reasons. One is that I think it is ineffective. Another reason is that by and large the people who suffer the most from a secondary boycott have absolutely nothing to do with the controversy. They are just innocent bystanders who get shot, and I just don't think it's an appropriate weapon for the Sierra Club to use.

So during this interim, I had persuaded--or several of us but I was one of them--had persuaded the board of directors to go along with withdrawing from the boycott as did the Audubon Society and I have forgotten who else, but certainly other conservation organizations. So I think that the ruffled feelings that came out of the boycott originally had by this time sort of subsided.

Lage: Was there someone within the Sierra Club that favored the boycott?

Sherwin: Oh, I think so. I can't remember exactly who it was.

Lage: But it didn't originate with the Sierra Club, I guess, the idea of it.

Sherwin: I think it originated with Project Jonah--what's her name, McIntyre? Anyway, I think the conference was really quite successful. We had some good speakers, and we had a lot of fun at some of the social events attending the conference, especially in San Diego. We had a final farewell dinner. It was really a riot--not literally!--but it was quite an hilarious affair.

Lage: What age group of Japanese would be represented?

Sherwin: Oh, all the way, the whole spectrum. We had a number of young professors of law from Japan. We had the former president of Tokyo University who was a lawyer, Kata. We had Sassa, who is a retired geologist, but he is still a consultant with the government. He is the top geologist working with the government in putting a large tunnel through a very broken up mountain there, which will connect two major cities eliminating a lot of mileage that they otherwise had to go between the two cities. Dr. Sassa is a friend of a friend of ours from the U. S. Geological Survey in Menlo Park, Genny Schumacher Smith's husband, Warren Smith. Oh, show her the plate, Janet, would you? At the end of the conference Mrs. Sassa

Sherwin: gave us this.

J. Sherwin: According to the Days it is a very fine Japanese china.

Lage: It's beautiful.

J. Sherwin: Isn't it lovely? This was one of the things we had to do when we went to Russia. We had a whole bag full of gifts; you never knew when you would need to bring out a gift.

Lage: Did you have to do that on your own or did the state department--

J. Sherwin: [laughs] Oh no, we did it on our own!

Sherwin: The government of the United States was very parsimonious when it comes to financing the delegation. Russell Train had to take up a collection so that we could give a reception.

Lage: But did they advise you on the protocol?

J. Sherwin: Oh yes, a young man from Washington called me after we accepted and told me all the things--

Lage: He told you to get the presents! [laughs]

J. Sherwin: Yes, and he told me what to wear and how to handle things. So I was glad that he did! [laughs]

VI THE ENVIRONMENT AND OTHER SOCIAL CONCERNS

The Sierra Club Legal Program: Restoring Democracy to Government

Sherwin: The legal program of the Sierra Club was, I think, the brainchild of Phil Berry, Fred Fisher, and Don Harris, all of whom were at Stanford Law School at the same time. Once started, it snowballed. It's inconceivable how much the legal committee and subsequently the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund has accomplished in terms of not only conservation, but in my opinion to a certain extent restoring democracy to the proceedings in the United States. This is a thesis that I have written speeches about and maybe you have seen them in some of the files.

Prior to the Roosevelt administration--I'm talking about Franklin D. Roosevelt--there hadn't been very many agencies, but as you will recall during the New Deal, the agencies bloomed like dandelions in the grass. The significant thing about it from the point of view that I am presenting at this time is that these agencies were appointed by the president and were responsible to nobody. They weren't elected. There was nobody to monitor what they did under the laws that created them and that they were supposed to administer; nobody to watch them, to determine whether or not what they were actually doing was in conformance with the laws established by our elected representatives.

So when our legal defense arm began to operate, it was the only way that the public could have any handle on keeping the activities of these agencies within the bounds of their legislative charter. So that's the sense in which I think that our legal defense fund not only did, and is doing, a marvelous job from the viewpoint of conservation, but it's also doing a great social service in restoring some measure of democracy to the operations of governmental agencies down to the local level.

- Lage: Were there other areas out of the environmental area where this same thing was taking place, for instance, consumer concerns?
- Sherwin: There may well be. I'm not aware of it because I'm not familiar with what has happened. I do know that some of the leading cases had to do with problems that were not conservation problems.
- Lage: The leading cases that the club took up?
- Sherwin: Leading cases that we used for the purpose of establishing standing to sue, which was an important problem, especially at the beginning. It became one of the major problems in the Mineral King controversy.
- Lage: Somebody just interviewed Al Forsyth, and it sounds like an awful lot was going on in New York in establishing these principles.
- Sherwin: Yes, Al Forsyth and Dave Sive did a sterling piece of work with respect to the Storm King project and with respect to the Hudson freeway proposal in New York.
- Lage: So if we wanted to get a really good picture of the Sierra Club program, and of how it contributed to real changes in the country, who would be the best people to interview, do you think? Phil Berry?
- Sherwin: Phil Berry, number one, Mike McCloskey was closely involved with it because it was such a big area that it involved such a volume of work, number one, that it couldn't be handled except by a special committee; number two, the executive committee of the Sierra Club not necessarily being lawyers wouldn't have had the competence to handle it anyway. So there was established what they called a conservation administration committee composed of the president and including Mike McCloskey and Phil Berry. They were empowered to make the first tentative decisions with respect to these lawsuits.

Now, the ultimate authority came back to the executive committee of the board. But I might say as far as my own participation is concerned, my modus operandi throughout has been that if you've got a competent person to do the job, why, give them authority, delegate the authority, and let them go to town--Nick Robinson, Phil Berry, whatever--so that even though I was a member of this conservation administration committee, I rarely, rarely had to make a decision personally about a lawsuit--oh, it happened once in a while.

I was also a member of the board of trustees of the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund for a while after it became a separate corporation, but there it was more a matter of general administration problems rather than specific lawsuits that occupied the trustees.

Lage: But you did get all of the paper work because I've seen that in the library!

Sherwin: Yes.

Lage: And Dave Sive, I would think, should be interviewed, in New York.

Sherwin: Dave Sive was a very important person in the establishment of the Sierra Club's competence to have any effect legally in the courtroom and a necessary precursor to what Phil was able to accomplish.

Lage: So his work came first, would you say?

Sherwin: Yes, I would say.

Lage: It was back in the sixties.

J. Sherwin: Wasn't he still on the board?

Sherwin: Yes, I think he was. I don't know the extent of the relationship between Phil and Dave Sive and now, of course, I just don't know.

Lage: That is something we can explore.

Environmentalists and the Labor Movement

Sherwin: Now you wanted to inquire about the relationships with labor.

Lage: We discussed the Shell Oil strike in the interview with Will Siri.* Did you have any other attempts to confer with labor or come to agreement with them? It's becoming more of a club concern now it seems, and there are more coalitions taking place.

Sherwin: We established a labor liason committee, but I don't think it ever really got off the ground. The idea was to have a committee that was not composed entirely of Sierra Club people but included representatives of labor. I just think that there wasn't enough general interest in reconciling the Sierra Club to labor to get it going actively, and I don't know whether the committee still exists now.

*See Appendix A and William E. Siri, Reflections on the Sierra Club, the Environment, and Mountaineering, 1950s--1960s, Sierra Club Oral History Project/Regional Oral History Office, 1979.

Lage: There still is a labor committee. Les Reid is the chairman, although I don't know how active he is.

Sherwin: Yes, Les is involved in labor himself. If anybody could do it, he would.

Lage: I think maybe it's been done more through the staff on the national level.

Sherwin: It could be. I recall one time that Will Siri and I were invited to give talks to the California Federation of Labor convention.

Lage: Here in San Francisco?

Sherwin: Yes, which we did.

Lage: Well, I didn't pull any punches, and I don't think Will Siri pulled any punches, and we were excoriated by a few of the leaders. I recall particularly being given the shaft by the president of the electrician's union.

Lage: What was his name, do you remember?

Sherwin: No, I don't. I think it was Brown or something like that. But afterwards, any number of delegates to this convention came up personally to greet me, and I'm sure Will had the same experience, and told us that they are for us, that these remarks by the president were out of line. So I don't know, maybe they were just being courteous.

Lage: What type of things were you speaking to them about?

Sherwin: [laughs] I don't remember! Oh, I think maybe one of the things that grated on some of their nerves was talking about zoning and untoward developments and protection of the coasts, that kind of thing--I think--which would have perhaps been a little untactful having in mind that the building trades are heavily represented in the California Federation of Labor.

Lage: Did you ever have any contact with Dave Jenkins?

Sherwin: I think so, but minimal.

Social Implications of Population Policy

Lage: You have mentioned population as something you thought you would want to discuss further and I notice that the population committee was formed while you were president [May 1971, John Tanton M. D., chairman].

Sherwin: Yes, my personal reaction to some of the population committee's proposals, which were not just a matter of birth control but a matter of controlling immigration, were a little anti with respect to their proposals to inhibit further the immigration of the people to the United States. I felt two things. One, that it would be very irritating to the Third World people, who are the ones that are suffering most from overpopulation in relation to their food and other existent resources.

Secondly, I felt that it was just a sort of general insult to peoples of every other nation besides the United States to emphasize the matter of controlling immigration. So I have always been at odds with the population committee over these two aspects.

Lage: That is something that the population committee has proposed and continues to propose?

Sherwin: Yes, I think so. Of course, I can't say. Recently I've been feeling sort of out of touch with the club. I get the minutes but I don't get the papers that are given to the board of directors before they make decisions on policy questions which would be much more informative as to what it is happening than the minutes are.

Lage: It seemed like the club took a stand in favor of abortion early on. I would think it wasn't quite as widely accepted in the early seventies at least. Do you remember any discussion about that, whether that would cause a--

Sherwin: I recall that there was discussion about terminating pregnancies, but I don't recall that anything ever came to a head during my time on the board of directors. I could be way off, but I just don't remember any--

Lage: You don't think the policy was accepted? I'd have to check on that. I thought it was a part of the population policy that the board of directors approved early in the seventies.

Sherwin: Well, I just don't remember. I really doubt it because I think I would have remembered that kind of thing, although certainly it wasn't as heated as it is now.

Lage: That might well be, that I'm looking at it from today's perspective. Okay, is there anything we haven't covered or anything else you would like to say?

Consensus and Accomplishment in the Sierra Club's Conservation Record

Sherwin: Yes. Most of our discussion here has dwelled on things that are part of organization and system, and one thing that re-reading some of the minutes has given me is reassurance about how much effort went into conservation. If you look at the minutes, I just can't remember being involved in the volume of conservation problems that the minutes reflect, but I was, and it's a relief to me because afterwards when I look back upon that time, I begin to think, my God, I missed the boat because I spent so much time on internal matters that I didn't really devote adequate attention to conservation. But that's not true. I look back on them, and I know for example how intimately I was involved in energy, in the Alaska problem, in the matter of conservation problems throughout the United States--the freeway through Breckinridge Park in San Antonio, the proposed highway through Overton Park in Memphis, Tennessee, the strip mining problem in the western United States, the question of building a bridge to Long Island in New York. We were right in the middle of all of these things.

Lage: It's interesting. I think that someone observed that the conflicts take place over internal matters, and that there is so much agreement on conservation in the club.

Sherwin: Yes, you asked me in previous interviews about whether our controversies involved badly distorted viewpoints with respect to conservation matters as between, say, Martin Litton or Larry Moss or Phil Berry and Will Siri and myself, and I kept telling you, no, but I think this kind of cinches it.

Lage: Well, I agree. I think that's an important point. Our interviews tend to focus on the conflicts; what can you say about the areas of agreement, in depth?

Sherwin: Oh, sometimes we laughed over certain projects, but it was really a question of priority, and we shouldn't have laughed over, for example, Martin Litton's preoccupation with the desert pupfish. God, he's right! [laughter]

Lage: That's a good point to end on, I think. It kind of puts it in perspective. The internal conflicts were a small part overall, but maybe they stick in your mind more.

Sherwin: Yes.

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EDITORIAL

A Broader Look at the Environment

ON MARCH 3, 1973, the Executive Committee of the Sierra Club voted unanimously to support the environmental goals of Shell Oil Company refinery workers in their collective bargaining with Shell management.

The action was given wide publicity in the California press, generating a predominantly critical response from a few dozen members that suggests a need to clarify the resolution and delineates the issues for the full membership.

The Committee endorsed the right of workers to a safe, healthful workplace and the principle of worker participation in the establishment of such conditions with the following wording:

"The Sierra Club supports the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union and other workers in their efforts to obtain working conditions which are environmentally safe, through provisions in their collective bargaining agreements that provide data to workers on health hazards, appropriate physical examinations, access to records on illness and deaths, and paid time to pursue these objectives. The President is authorized to write to the president of the union and make known that we share the views expressed in the alternative resolution."

The item was placed on the agenda at the union's request, and, in fairness, we invited Shell management representatives to present their case. Both sides were heard and a longer, less precise statement of support that had been signed by ten respected organizations (Wilderness Society and National Parks and Conservation Association included) was considered, but rejected as too broad. After thorough examination and deliberation of the facts, we were persuaded that the union position, which already had been accepted by virtually all the petroleum giants, was a sound one.

Such trade-union objectives merit the vocal support of the Sierra Club and allied organizations, for the very basic reason that an unhealthy micro-environment anywhere reduces the overall vitality of our natural world. The two are inseparable. While the degenerative effects of a Trans-Alaska Pipeline on that entire state are more obvious, and while we are all aware of the potential for far-reaching damage from a nuclear power plant, the relationship between an unsafe refinery or steel mill and their surrounding communities is equally close. The cornerstone of current ecological understanding is the concept of interrelationships. A blight on the land anywhere deserves correction as much for its adverse effect on its neighboring surroundings as for its immediate local ramifications. Indeed the Sierra Club cannot and perhaps should not initiate or actively participate in the correction of all environmental afflictions. But is it not in the best interests of the Club and its broad goals to lend our vocal influence in support of whoever would undertake improvements outside our direct sphere of interest?

The press widely reported that our resolution was based on a need to demonstrate Sierra Club's concern for people. As much as we do need to generate a widespread public understanding of that truth, it was not our motive here, but merely a very beneficial side-effect. But this point relates directly to much of the written member disapproval of the resolution: viz., that we should not in any way become involved in labor-management disputes. Our willingness to endorse the working environmental goals of a labor union cannot be construed as an intrusion on labor-management bargaining. But it can be instrumental in rallying strong support for our basic conservation programs, such as the recent condemnation by the United Mine Workers of strip-mining. Wherever we find a common environmental interest with another group, no matter what its primary objectives may be, we strengthen our cause by lending our support.

It seems curious that our Club's extension of its activities beyond traditional wilderness and resource conservation should still cause some worry over a diminishing Club credibility. We have been fighting for a clean and healthy environment for several years without reducing the effectiveness of our efforts to protect wildlife and wild places. Our scope of concern must continue to broaden just to keep pace with the country's exponentially expanding environmental threats. Wild places and natural beauty do not stand in splendid isolation from the perils of urban pollution. They are as directly related to refineries and power plants as our ability to conserve them is to our interest in protecting populated areas. The danger

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Editorial (Continued)

of reducing Sierra Club strength and vitality would more likely stem from ignoring environmental threats to the human condition than from fighting them.

It is each member's right to know the names of the Executive Committee members

who unanimously carried the resolution in question: Laurence I. Moss, Raymond Sherwin, William Siri, Paul Swotek, and June Viviant.

We and our fellow members of the Board of Directors have been elected by and represent the collective voice of 140,000 of you. We cannot hope to reflect the individual thinking of each member on every issue (I know loyal, long-time members who do not agree with our Mineral King position). But it is your directors' responsibility to pursue our common goals with vigor and resourcefulness, to act with conviction against environmental degradation anywhere, to join with ad hoc allies in legitimate causes today, and to welcome their support for our programs tomorrow.

When the Sierra Club acts on behalf of health and safety in the workplace or against urban freeway expansion or for clean energy sources, we do not depart from our established priorities. Rather we extend our efforts to combat whatever insidious conditions may threaten the survival of natural beauty, wilderness, open space and the quality of life for all.

RAYMOND SHERWIN, *President*

Sierra Club Bulletin

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Sierra Club History Series

Theodore A. Snyder, Jr.

SOUTHEAST CONSERVATION LEADER AND SIERRA CLUB PRESIDENT,
1960s-1970s

With an Introduction by
Denny Shaffer

An Interview Conducted by
Ann Lage in 1980

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TED SNYDER
presiding at Sierra Club's
1979 High Trip dinner

*Photograph by Mush Emmons
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INTRODUCTION

Ted Snyder is a man of the old South. He lives in an antebellum home with great white columns. He speaks naturally of aunts "who were maiden ladies." His comments about his family emphasize his roots in the Southern land..."They were farmers, my father and my father's father." And Ted is today on that Southern farm, living in that home of the old South, "practicing forestry in the way the Sierra Club tells people they should practice forestry," raising his son Teddy, the link between roots, history, tradition and the future.

Ted's love of wilderness, his determination that it will be saved, and his anger at those who would destroy it are characteristics shared by all our great conservation leaders. Combined with personal brilliance and driving energy, they enable Ted to be among the most effective of the club's "wilderness people."

In May, 1977, he found himself elected treasurer, and in 1978, president of the Sierra Club.

The plunge from the excitement of the wilderness fight into the cold, lonely water of administrative responsibilities was upon him. He responded too, perhaps less expectedly, with flexibility, openness and an insistence that he, the board of directors, and the senior staff use all of our abilities and the tools available to us to become more effective leaders.

Mike McCloskey was given the authority to be the executive director in fact, rather than just in title. Accountability was, for the first time, now in place. A professional administrator was hired, a new budget system put in place, and for the club's employees, a personnel committee was established as well as a professional wage and salary plan. Most remarkable to those of us close to the board of directors, consent was obtained to employ a management consultant to provide training to the directors.

The structural strengthening of the club laid a strong foundation for our unprecedented growth of 1981 and 1982. Without that foundation, we would surely have buckled and faltered, unable to adjust in an orderly way to the overwhelming influx of new members and resources.

It takes a person who listens as well as talks, learns as well as teaches, and who is deadly serious about issues yet able to laugh about his own limitations, to leave the strong personal mark on the Sierra Club after his presidency that Ted Snyder has.

In a strong voice, with softly accented phrases delivered like a round-house punch starting at floor level, Ted speaks for all we in the Sierra Club love and value. His firmness of principle and sensitivity to the people and the times have permitted him a unique spot in the listing of great Sierra Club leaders.

Denny Shaffer

March 25, 1982

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Ted Snyder was interviewed on three occasions in October and November, 1980, a few months after his two-year term as Sierra Club president had ended. Intended as the first in a series of exit interviews with retiring club presidents, the interview focuses on internal affairs and conservation issues during his presidency. The freshness of Snyder's recollections and his cogent analysis of the inner workings of the club volunteer structure and its relationship with the staff make this a valuable picture of the present-day Sierra Club. His discussions of the Alaska campaign, relationships with the Carter administration, and conflicts over wilderness issues give important insights into the environmental movement in 1980.

Ted Snyder is one of several activists from the southeastern United States who have held prominent positions in the club's national leadership structure since the mid-seventies. His account of his background in the Carolinas, his growing awareness of conservation issues in the 1960s, his involvement in battles for eastern wilderness, and his emergence as a national club leader are of particular interest.

Although the written transcript cannot convey Snyder's distinctive regional accent, which has delighted so many club meetings, his colorful language, punctuated with regionalisms, is evident. Also apparent is his candid manner, his energetic spirit and bold approach, coupled with his sense that involvement in the Sierra Club, its outings and its conservation campaigns, should be, and has been for Ted, fun.

Shortly after his interview, Ted Snyder sent all the files relating to his presidency and national conservation campaigns, including the eastern wilderness campaign, to The Bancroft Library for inclusion with the Sierra Club papers. His files relating to southeastern issues will be place in an appropriate regional repository.

Mr. Snyder reviewed the transcript of his interview for accuracy, making no substantive changes. The tapes of the interview are available at The Bancroft Library.

Ann Lage
Interviewer/Editor

February 10, 1982
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California Berkeley

I. PERSONAL PROFILE: FAMILY, SCHOOLING AND CAREER

[Interview 1: October 3, 1980]##

Family and Youth in Brevard, North Carolina, and Walhalla, South Carolina

Lage: Ted, we want to start tonight by building up an idea of your personal background, answering the general question of what makes an environmentalist. Let's start with a view of your early life--where you were born and your parents.

Snyder: I was born in Greenville, South Carolina [December 17, 1932]. My father had grown up in Greenville, and he had a farm there. He also had a house in Greenville which he owned and in which he maintained two aunts of mine who were maiden ladies. But he didn't stay in Greenville. He had a fifteen hundred acre farm in Brevard, North Carolina, which was about forty or forty-five miles north of Greenville on top of the Blue Ridge Mountains. He had two or three hundred acres in farmland all along creek bottoms, and the rest was timberland.

Lage: Was this a working farm?

Snyder: Oh, yes. He cut his timber. He had a small sawmill and cut timber and processed it with the help of a few laborers. He built houses and he built dams--small, concrete dams--for people who wanted them for their personal estates or for summer camps. He built some summer camps for the textile mills down around Greenville who at that time maintained summer camps for their workers. The workers would go up and spend two weeks in the summer, and they had the cabins and a lake and pavilions and tennis courts and the whole thing.

Lage: Was his timber business sort of an adjunct to his construction business?

Snyder: Yes, he would cut the timber and use it in the buildings. It was not a big operation at all, [it was] a very small sawmill.

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 99.

Snyder: I grew up on the farm eight to nine miles from Brevard. We lived on a small lake in a house where you had to go across the dam to get to the house. We grew up there in the mountains a quarter of a mile away from the road. We were back up the stream from the highway.

My father had a grist mill with a large waterwheel. He ground meal and made flour for everybody in that community.

Lage: When was this?

Snyder: I was born in 1932 and I grew up there until I was ready to go to school. I stayed up there all the time, and when I got to be six years old, my mother thought that she was going to teach me. For a few months she went through this home teaching process, but she soon lost patience.

After that, I went to Greenville and stayed in the winter with my aunts and went to school there. There were four boys. We all went and stayed with our aunts in Greenville in the winter and went to school. We stayed up in the mountains with our father and mother in the summertime. My father would come down and get us most weekends. We'd go back up and spend the weekend in the mountains, rather than going to school in Brevard which was some nine miles away. My parents didn't think the school in Brevard was that good. It was a long ride on the school bus.

Then with the coming of the Second World War and the shortages of gasoline and tires, it became apparent that my folks couldn't keep up that method of operating [sending us to Greenville in the winter and bringing us up every weekend.] So they sold the place in the mountains and bought a farm near Walhalla, and we moved down there. Then we went to school in Walhalla. We only lived about two miles from town. It was close enough to ride the school bus or even walk. We walked to school a lot of days when the weather was good. We walked home a lot. The roads were unpaved. Riding the school bus was an adventure. I grew up and went through the fourth grade in Greenville, and I went from fifth through the tenth grades in Walhalla.

Lage: Tell me a little bit more about the community. Was it fairly isolated? Was it a poor community or a wealthy community?

Snyder: Walhalla was a farming town. I would say it was a poor community. It was at the foot of the mountains. Land was not rich because it was hilly, and the fields were not fertile. It was Upland Piedmont. Our house was right at the foot of the mountain, just about a mile to the foot of the Blue Ridge escarpment. You can imagine that the land was steep hollows with very little fertile land except in the creek bottoms--the small streams. The streams have large, flat bottom land which is quite fertile. But most of the land was not fertile, and it should never have been farmed. People were farming cotton then, but the land was much more suited to pastureland or growing timber.

Lage: Did I get the date of your birth?

Snyder: Nineteen thirty-two, which was the height of the Depression, I guess. But by the early 1940s, with the coming of the war, that part of the country was coming out of the Depression. My father grew cotton on the farm at Walhalla during the war years. The war years were profitable farming years. After the war, the textile industry expanded in that part of the country, and farm labor became more difficult to get because the laborers all went to work in the mills. We converted the farms from row crops to cattle farming, and that was profitable.

I grew up on a working farm doing all of the things on a farm. I can do anything you'd need to do to make a farm work.

Lage: Are you still living on that farm?

Snyder: I still live there, yes.

Lage: Do you work it?

Snyder: It's all in trees now. When my father died, we planted all the open land in trees because my mother was going to live on in the house, and we had no way of farming it. My brothers and I were all engaged in some business or profession, and nobody wanted to farm. It's now all in trees, and I'm practicing forestry in the way that the Sierra Club tells people they should practice forestry.

Lage: You have made a business out of it? Are you actually harvesting trees?

Snyder: Yes. It's a long process. There is a long lead time in forestry. But over a period of years, it will be a profitable operation.

Lage: What was your family's education, and your father's and your mother's background?

Snyder: My father was the only son in his family, and he had five sisters. His uncles were all killed in the Civil War. I think there were four or five of them. Anyhow, the family was pretty well wiped out in the Civil War. My father was the only person to carry on the Snyder name, the only one left. They were farmers, my father and my father's father. I guess my father's grandfather had come to South Carolina from Philadelphia. My great grandfather's family had come to Philadelphia from Holland. At least that is the family history. I don't know whether it is accurate or not. I can remember talking to my father's first cousin in her old age, and she told me she could remember her grandmother who was also my father's grandmother by half-blood. That grandmother told my father's cousin about some members of the family coming from Philadelphia to visit, and they had a coach and liveried servants. [laughter] And that's all I know!

Lage: That's the family history!

Snyder: That's the family history. We still have some of the furniture though. I have a sideboard that's mine that was brought from Philadelphia and a matching table that goes with it and some card tables that were brought down back in those days, and a wardrobe.

Lage: They started out as Yankees.

Snyder: Most of the family furniture was burned, not by the Yankees but just in a house fire. When the house burned, the family was in the process of moving from the country into town, and the valuable things were in the country house. They were carting them and somehow the country house caught fire and burned down, and all of the antiques burned up except for these few pieces.

Lage: How about your mother's background?

Snyder: Well, I'm not finished with the old man!

Lage: [laughs] Oh, I'm sorry! Tell me more.

Snyder: My father went as far as his grammar school went. I believe it went to the eighth grade. Then he went to work, and he operated a roller mill for some years. Then he took a secretarial course and learned book-keeping and became the bookkeeper for the Piedmont Manufacturing Company, which was a textile mill. He rose to be a minor officer in the company. He started playing the stock market on the side, and he decided he would quit and do that. He formed a partnership and became a stockbroker for a few years. Then he decided he had enough money to retire, so he bought some land on top of a mountain [Brevard] and started building and went into the construction business.

Lage: That was his retirement.

Snyder: Then when the Second World War came along, he sold all that and moved to Walhalla and just farmed for the remainder of his life. He farmed and raised cattle.

My mother is from Laurens, South Carolina. She was a school teacher. She graduated from Winthrop College in South Carolina. Her family came into the country before the revolution. Some of them settled around Hillsboro, North Carolina, and fought in the revolution on the American side.

Lage: Who was the person most interested in the education of the four boys?

Snyder: Well, I would say they both were equally interested. They were both well educated. Even though my father didn't go to college, he had commuted when he was working in the mill. He rode the commuter train.

Snyder: It was about a ten or fifteen mile trip. He rode, it and he read on the train. He could recite poem after poem. He had read all of Shakespeare, and he was all the time quoting him. He and I would have contests doing the Sunday New York Times crossword puzzle, and he would beat me most of the time. Both parents were equally interested in having us get good educations. We had a lot of books in the house. We always had lots of books, and there was no shortage of something to read.

Lage: Was there anything particular in your reading that made an impact?

Snyder: It's hard to say. I guess I read at random until shortly before I went to college. I started working my way through the Harvard classics which we had. I wouldn't swear that I read them all, but I read most of them. Then I got into Mark Twain. I can remember reading Mark Twain and lying in the chair crossways (because that's the way kids always sit) and just roaring with laughter. It was the funniest time of my life! Everybody else in the family was mystified at what I found so funny. [laughter] So I did that, and I just kept reading. But those are the two sets of books that I can really remember having taken great pleasure in reading.

Lage: Was your family different? I'm assuming that there was an emphasis on education partly from looking at the way your education progressed in your resume. Is that a correct assumption?

Snyder: Well, I never felt any pressure or sense of being told what I should read or had to read.

Lage: Were there certain goals set for you that you were aware of?

Snyder: No, I can't remember a thing. The only thing I can remember was being told that I should read, and my father kept after me to read [James Fenimore] Cooper. I finally went and got one of Cooper's books and I couldn't understand it! I had the hardest time, and I read it for a day or two and took it back to the library. I can't even remember which one of the books it was, but I didn't like it. About three or four years later I tried it again, and it was thoroughly enjoyable. It was just the wrong book at the wrong time. But I went through all of these other books entirely on my own without anybody telling me to.

Lage: Was there any religious emphasis in your home?

Snyder: Well, my parents made us go to Sunday school even though they didn't go. They would go to church sometimes. When we lived in the mountains in Brevard, my mother always had Sunday school for us on Sunday morning. She would play the piano and make us sing some hymns or church songs, and she would read us some Bible story.

When we lived in Walhalla we had to go to church, and most of the time the children would walk to Sunday school. It was about three miles to the church because it was on the other side of town. My parents would come to church, and we'd all ride home. That was the standard procedure.

Lage: Was this done with a lot of reluctance?

Snyder: Oh, we hated it!

Lage: What church was that?

Snyder: Methodist.

Lage: Was your family a typical member of the community?

Snyder: No, because we lived out in the country. The people around us were poor people or tenant farmers, and there was no social interaction with them. It was so far to town that we didn't get to play with the kids in town that much, although in the summertime the kids would come out from town quite often and play with us. They always came to us. We very rarely went to town to play with the town kids. We'd go to the creek swimming or go hiking or something like that.

Lage: What about in Greenville and Walhalla?

Snyder: This was in Walhalla. In the mountains [Brevard] it was just like Walhalla. There were no kids of the same social class in the community. So we played with each other.

Lage: What have your three brothers done?

Snyder: They've had varied careers, every one of them. The brother next to me-- his name is John--went to the University of Chicago, too. He was a china housewares buyer for Bloomingdale's [Department Store] as his first job. He's always lived in New York. Then he got into the carpet business. He rose to be the top officer in the subsidiary of a commercial carpet company. Now he is a stockbroker. He has been successful in all three careers.

The next brother is Charles whose nickname was Chib. "Chib" was his grandfather's nickname. He had a career in the military and the Air Force. When he was a lieutenant colonel and he had finished his twenty years, he quit. While he was in the missile department he obtained some advanced degrees by studying in the silos when they were watching the missiles. He got two master's degrees in management and a Ph.D. in economics. He is now a professor of economics at Auburn University.

My youngest brother, Henry, decided to take up art. He went and studied at the Art Students' League after he finished college in New York. He studied in New York and is still trying to be an artist, and he is marginally successful.

Lage: Did any of your brothers take up an interest in the environment?

Snyder: Well, they all were interested, but I'm the only one who has taken up cudgels. [laughter]

Higher Education and the Army

Lage: Let's go on with your education and how it proceeded.

Snyder: It was the style in Walhalla for boys to go off to military academies after they got into high school. At that time, most of the kids would go off for the last two years of high school to places like Riverside [High School] which is at Gainesville, Georgia, or to McCallie [High School] which is in Chattanooga [Tennessee]. There were several places. But Riverside and McCallie were the two that were really in vogue in Walhalla. It came that time, and it looked like I had to make a choice about whether I wanted to go to a military academy. I had heard about the University of Chicago somehow. I can't tell you how. I said to my parents, "Let me try that." They said, "Okay," thinking that I didn't have a ghost of a chance.

Lage: This was after the tenth grade?

Snyder: Yes. I sent off for the entrance examination. They mailed the entrance examination to the librarian at the school and she administered it to me. They sent it out to a kid that wanted to come who hadn't finished high school. Maybe everyone had to take it, regardless of where you were. Anyhow, I took the entrance exam. The librarian at the high school gave it to me, and in due course I was accepted. I can remember going out in the yard with the letter in my hands to my father who was watering the mule or something [laughter] and saying, "Daddy, look, I've been accepted." He said, "Okay, if they'll take you, I'll send you."

Lage: You didn't have a friend there? You didn't know anything about it?

Snyder: Nothing, no. So off I went.

Lage: You must have had some direction.

Snyder: I think my parents were surprised that I passed the entrance exam.

Lage: You finished tenth grade?

Snyder: Yes, but that was not uncommon at the University of Chicago. Half of the people in my class were in that same category, and a number of them were even younger than I was.

Lage: What year was this?

- Snyder: Nineteen forty-nine. That was the way it worked. Robert Hutchins was chancellor then, and the university was at the height of the general education and Great Books Programs. It was in its full flower. The theory was to take anybody who was qualified regardless of age or anything else. Anybody who could pass the entrance exam could go through college at their own speed. I tore into it!
- Lage: What kind of an impact did the University of Chicago make on a boy from Walhalla?
- Snyder: I'm sure it had a radical impact. I think in a nutshell it made a liberal out of somebody who, if I had remained in that environment and gone to a southern school, would have been a very conservative, very timid sort of person.
- Lage: When you speak of conservative, liberal, and timid, are you talking about temperament as well as politics?
- Snyder: Yes, temperament, politics, and education in the sense of culture--of knowing what's what. The southern colleges just don't give that to people. You only get it at large universities in large cultural centers.
- Lage: It's more of a broadening.
- Snyder: It's a complete broadening. You learn a perspective on the world which includes the world of art and music and letters that you just are never exposed to unless you are in a large population center. At least that's my opinion.
- Lage: Did this create a tension with your family or within yourself?
- Snyder: I can't remember any tension within myself. I can remember after the first quarter up there going home and sitting around the fire and regaling my parents and my brothers with all the things that I was learning--and with true sophomoric expression probably! [laughter]
- Lage: You were probably totally impossible!
- Snyder: Probably, and I sense that my old man would have said, "What have I done." He may have been wondering what he had gotten into, but he never faltered. He never hesitated to completely support me to stay in there and do it exactly as I wanted to do.
- Lage: Then where did your goals go from there?
- Snyder: While I was at the University of Chicago, the Korean War occurred. I had to register for the draft as everybody did. The local draft board at Walhalla was very kind and nice, and they told me that I had to go, but that they would cooperate, and as long as I was in college they would leave me alone. They said that as soon as I finished with my

Snyder: education, I should come on in, and they'd send me. When I saw that I was faced with going to the war, I asked them if I continued my education would they continue to defer me, and they said yes. I had sort of decided I wanted to go to law school anyhow, having gotten a smattering of education and seeing that politics was what I was interested in. Politics seemed to be the way to influence events. It looked like most of the legislators in the various legislative bodies were lawyers, so I asked my father if he would send me to law school. He said, yes, he would. I applied, and the draft board was willing to defer me. So it was a combination of wanting to stay out of the war, plus wanting to get the legal education.

I applied to Harvard. That's where I wanted to go. It was the best.

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Snyder: Well, to my great shock and chagrin, Harvard sent me back a letter and said, "You're not qualified. We will not even furnish you with an application blank."

Lage: Where did you fall short?

Snyder: I went to the University of Chicago, and they said, "A degree from the University of Chicago is not acceptable. You don't have enough education."

Lage: I didn't realize that.

Snyder: I've got the letter somewhere. They said, "If you go to college for another couple of years somewhere and then apply, we'll consider sending you an application."

Lage: That's an interesting document.

Snyder: [chuckles] I wonder if I'll ever be able to make them regret it! Then I applied late in the day to the University of Virginia and to Duke [University] and was accepted by both of them. I went to Duke, after asking a number of people. Apparently the two schools were about equal in quality insofar as their reputations were concerned. I think Duke was a better school, better quality. Virginia was too busy maintaining its reputation. I went to law school for three years.

Lage: We didn't explore any further when you said you decided that you wanted to get into politics.

Snyder: Well, I never did.

Lage: That might still be a possibility.

Snyder: The Sierra Club has been kind of a politics. But after I got out of law school, I had to go over to the draft board, and I said, "Here I am. Give me sixty days, and let me see if I can get a commission." They said,

Snyder: "Okay, we'll give you sixty days, and then you've got to come." So I went to see my congressman, and to Strom Thurmond, who was a [Democratic] senator and had just gotten up there. I said, "Help me get a commission." Strom came through and got me a direct commission as a lieutenant in the Judge Advocate General's Corps.

Lage: So you were working in the legal corps?

Snyder: Yes, I got a job and went directly from Walhalla to the Army as a first lieutenant.

Lage: Was your family Democratic? Everybody was, weren't they?

Snyder: Yes, but the earliest recollection of politics I can remember is hearing my parents talking about whether or not they were going to vote for [Wendell] Willkie. I think they did.

Lage: That would be a departure, wouldn't it?

Snyder: But I can remember that, talking about Willkie. It sticks in my head.

Lage: Anything from the war experience--

Snyder: No, I just did my job.

Early Career in Law and Politics

Snyder: When I got out of the army, I opened up a law office in Greenville.

Lage: Did you have any thoughts about not going back to the hometown?

Snyder: No, that's where I wanted to go.

Lage: So you were happy with the setting you had been raised in.

Snyder: Yes, and I promptly commenced to starve like all young lawyers do! [laughter] My uncle who lived in Greenville had some law cases pending, and he had a famous trial lawyer [Tom Wofford] representing him. My uncle told Wofford, "Will you figure out some way to get Ted to help you?" Wofford called me up, and he said, "Come up here and do some research." He gave me some little projects to do. I did them, and he liked it, and he said, "Look, I need some help. Why don't you move your office next door to mine, so I can catch you." We gradually got closer and closer together and finally formed a partnership, or he took me in. He was the politician. He had been in politics from the time he had been practicing law. He had been the campaign manager for one or two governors. He was Strom Thurmond's campaign manager when Strom got

Snyder: elected on the write-in ballot as senator. That was Wofford's idea. Wofford put Thurmond up to it and then did it. Later Strom promised that he would resign at the end of two years and run in a primary and let the people decide.

In the meantime, Mr. Wofford had been campaign manager for the governor who had gotten elected. I'm not sure exactly of the time. Strom resigned as he had promised, thinking that the governor would reappoint him to fill out his [Thurmond's] unexpired term. He didn't; he appointed Wofford [laughter] to fill out the unexpired term. Wofford did eight months as the interim U.S. senator.

Lage: When was this?

Snyder: This was all before I came on the scene. He was the politician, and I can remember when we were talking about forming a partnership, he said, "We got to have one rule and that is that we will have the same politics. Since I'm the senior, you've either got to follow my politics, or you've got to be quiet." It seemed reasonable.

Lage: How were his politics?

Snyder: He was a Democrat. But later he changed and became a Republican, the same as Strom. I can remember when Strom changed, to Wofford's consternation, because Strom was one of his best friends and Wofford couldn't understand it. After we were practicing together and Wofford was getting out of politics, the local state senator decided that he would run for re-election to the state senate and, at the same time, run against Strom for the United States Senate. My partner was out at lunch one day drinking beer with his friends, and they persuaded him or he got the idea that he would run for the state senate himself. It was too late. The primaries had passed. He announced anyhow, and we got him elected on a write-in ticket as a state senator.

Lage: Were you involved in that?

Snyder: I was involved in that and campaigned.

Lage: What time period was this?

Snyder: It was in the late fifties or early sixties. Then he ran for re-election two times and was re-elected to the state senate, but every time against strong opposition. I was involved in those campaigns--helping--and so I got a flavor of it. He used to tell me stories about being in the Senate. Lyndon Johnson was majority leader when Wofford was up there, and he knew Lyndon real well. I can remember when Lyndon was running for president (in one of his runs for president), he came to Greenville, and I met him because Mr. Wofford took me to meet him. I was doing things. I was a young Democrat and was piddling around. It wasn't much, and I didn't understand what was going on. But I was trying!

Lage: Do you still have political goals?

Snyder: Yes, but I got into the Sierra Club and got diverted, got drawn up into the politics of the Sierra Club.

Lage: Let me ask you one other question before we get into that. How did the civil rights movement impinge on the course of these events? Did it have any particular effect on your own perceptions?

Snyder: I played very little part in the civil rights movement. I did nothing actively on either side except that my partner, Mr. Wofford, and I were regarded as the experts in South Carolina on federal law. If anybody had a case in federal court in those days and they couldn't think of any other way to do it, they would employ us. We represented the city of Greenville and the various agencies there when they were in all of the civil rights litigation. But only at the appellate level. The city attorneys and the local lawyers would get completely over their head, and they'd come to us to appeal a case. We appealed, and I did all the work. I wrote all of the briefs and did all the arguing of the desegregation suits--on the wrong side, you might say--but the wrong side has got to be represented. The desegregation suits desegregated the local airport.

Lage: Were your feelings in tune with southern feeling at the time or did the experience in Chicago change you?

Snyder: No, I can't remember any emotion except that I was determined to do the best job as a lawyer that could be done and with neutral emotions. A desegregation case was the only case I ever argued in the Supreme Court. I argued the dimestore sit-in cases for the city of Greenville; briefed them, too, and did all the work.

Lage: Okay, so now we've got you almost into the Sierra Club! Should we cover anything else before that time?

Snyder: We can go back if something occurs, but I think you really have brought me along.

II. THE SIERRA CLUB IN THE CAROLINAS, 1968-1970

Growing Consciousness of the Endangered Wilderness

- Lage: I usually ask about outdoor experiences, but it sounds like it was part of your life.
- Snyder: I grew up in the country as you can see. I always lived in the country. My earliest memories were taking long walks. My father was an inveterate bird hunter. He was always hunting and fishing--fly fishing for trout. He kept the streams on the place stocked with rainbow trout. Some of the earliest memories I have as a kid (I must have been five years old) was tagging after him on bird hunts through the fields and woods. I can vividly remember all kinds of adventures and see them in color--just as if I was there today.
- Lage: So you feel this had quite an impact on your development.
- Snyder: It must have because my father was always hiking and roaming around the hills. He let us go hunting with him, but he would take only one at a time. When we moved to Walhalla he was still doing that. When we got big enough to have guns, we all had our own shotguns and learned to hunt. We also had our own fishing rods. I can remember one summer we set out as kids. We were going to go fishing everyday, and we did. We made it a religious exercise to go fishing everyday.
- Lage: Was there a change in the environment in your area? Had the area begun to develop? With the conservationists from California, that's a theme. They come back from World War II and the environment has changed so much.
- Snyder: It was happening, but we didn't see it. Perhaps it didn't happen in that backwash as soon as it did in other places. We were really remote. I can remember sitting in the car on the main street of Walhalla and Daddy saying, "We're watching the last run of shad," referring to the people walking by. I think that part of the country probably was a backwater--as were so many frontier places where the people had trickled in.

Snyder: They had been unsuccessful. That's why they were migrating in many respects. They migrated to the places that were hardest [to live in], so they were less well endowed to start with.

Lage: So it wasn't a development-minded area.

Snyder: It was not.

Lage: Has it developed now? Is it very different now?

Snyder: Yes, just because the population increased.

Lage: When would you say you started seeing that the activity had changed?

Snyder: About 1950. But Walhalla has not grown much. I'd say the population of the town has grown by about a thousand since I was a kid.

Lage: Which makes it what?

Snyder: It's thirty-five hundred now. [It was four-thousand by the 1980 census, 3993 to be exact, but they have a campaign on to find seven more people. T.A.S., March 27, 1981]

Lage: Let's talk about how you got into the Sierra Club.

Snyder: My brother, John, had been out West driving. He came back and said, "Teddy, do you know that there are places out there that you can walk for two weeks and not get to the other side of." I said, "That's impossible," He said, "Yes, and there are trips you can go on where they take people there." He didn't know exactly what they were, but I started watching.

Lage: Tell me what time period this was.

Snyder: This was in the middle-sixties. The trips were in the back of my mind, and one day John called. He said, "Teddy, let's go to Africa," I said, "Okay." [chuckles] We both talked about it, and we said, "We'll go up the Nile all the way." We started getting books, and it turned out that just going up the Nile took a long time. We spent three or four months planning, and we finally got it worked out. We employed a white hunter to take us. I think that was my real awakening to the wild--the spirit of wilderness and the spirit of wild things. It was just the three of us, the two of us and the white hunter.

Lage: A white hunter did you say?

Snyder: That's what you have on safaris, the white hunter as your guide.

Lage: I hadn't heard that expression.

Snyder: This white hunter would not kill things. He would not shoot. He was strictly interested in taking photographers on safaris. Well, we were strictly interested in taking pictures, had no desire to hunt or kill anything. We didn't want to. The white hunter had some servants. They called them "boys." That's a degrading term, but that's what they called them--three or four boys--who did the work and stayed in camp. He was a very sensitive fellow, and he was very interested in pointing out to us how civilization was encroaching on the plains. We didn't go where the tourists went. We camped out, and we went where there weren't roads. It was an unstructured safari. We camped by a river for two or three days, and we said, "Okay, it's time to move. We've had the river experience. Now we want to camp on top of a hill." Okay, we camped on top of a hill next time. We carried his brochure, and it said, "On all my trips you will see these," and we started checking them off and said, "Hey, Bob, we haven't seen this critter yet." He said, "Okay, I'll find it for you." [laughter] We'd go out hunting the stuff that we hadn't checked off his list. We did a lot of walking.

Lage: How long a trip was this?

Snyder: We stayed there three weeks. We'd go stalking things. We'd leave the cars in the camp and go, or we'd be out and see something we'd want to take a picture of. Bob would say we've got to walk and get down wind from it. We made great circles and would go and stalk through the underbrush. Some lions got after us one time. We were by ourselves, and we were out in the country, and we kept count of how many lions we had seen versus people. The lions won by a big majority. I think that's what turned me on to the idea of the vast wildernesses.

We went in 1966. We climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, too. Bob left us on the side of the mountain, and we climbed it by ourselves.

We got back, and one Sunday in the New York Times I saw an article about trips out West. The article had the addresses of the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society and the American Forestry Association. I said, "This is it." I wrote off to the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society and said, "I want to join. Send me the stuff about the outings." I joined them both, and still I am a member of both.

Lage: Had you heard about the Sierra Club in any other way? You hadn't heard about the Grand Canyon campaign?

Snyder: That was the first time, although we took the New York Times. I think the Grand Canyon ads were after. I can remember seeing the ad, "Would you flood the Sistine Chapel so the tourists could get closer to the ceiling," or something. I've got no recollections of any ads before this Sunday article about trips out West. There was a picture, and the article was about "The Chinese Wall" which is in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. That's the place I wanted to go, that was exactly what I was looking for.

Snyder: They sent me the stuff on trips, and I went on a highlight trip in the Wind River Mountains [Wyoming]. Jerry LeBec from the Ventana chapter was the trip leader and Chuck Schultz from the Bay Area was the assistant leader. They sort of brainwashed me. I didn't know it at the time, and maybe it wasn't deliberate on their part [chuckles], but something rubbed off.

Lage: Do you mean a conservation message?

Snyder: Yes, here we're in a wilderness. I had no idea what a wilderness was--- vast areas, walking for days and still more to go in front of me. I had a tremendous time. But still I was just interested in going on these trips. I had no idea of doing anything else but going on the trips.

The Formation of the Carolinas Group

Snyder: I went on the Wind River Mountain trip in '67. It was the year after we went to Africa. Sometime in '68, people in Winston-Salem [North Carolina] decided that they were going to have an organized Sierra Club in the two Carolinas. Mind you, I didn't know any of them. They didn't know me at all. I didn't even know their names, had never seen one, had never heard from one. One day through the mail came this letter saying, "We in Winston-Salem are going to organize things." They sent a questionnaire and one of the questions was "If you are willing to serve in some capacity, check yes." I checked yes, not knowing a damn thing! The questionnaire had a whole bunch of other questions and then a place for comments. I don't know why, but I was feeling bad or mad or something. I must have been getting aware of things. Anyhow, I filled out all of the space for comment about what needed to be done.

Lage: What kinds of things were you thinking of?

Snyder: I can't remember. I said nobody was protecting the mountains and the rivers, and there weren't any outings to go on. Anyhow, the page was so full I turned the page over and covered the back with whatever it was that was bothering me.

Lage: It's interesting because the picture you give is of not being aware of threats to the wilderness, and yet you must have been in some way to write this.

Snyder: I'm not sure.

Lage: You didn't save a copy?

Snyder: I'm positive I was not aware of any threats to the wilderness. I had learned that there was a wilderness near me at Shining Rock. It was a wild area. It was really a wilderness because the Wilderness Act had been passed, but I didn't know any of that. I had hiked around there. There was something I was mad about. It think it was because they hadn't cleared the trail out or something totally unconnected. But anyhow, I'm positive that I was not environmentally aware. I don't know what I wrote, but I said something needed to be done about something.

Anyhow, in due course of time I got a postcard saying, "With your permission we are going to make a ballot up, and we'll put you on it. We'll just condense the stuff you wrote and make that into a ballot statement." I didn't even answer! Eventually, the ballot came out mimeographed, and they had edited my remarks into a little paragraph. I voted for myself dutifully and sent it in. After a time somebody called me on the phone and said, "Are you Ted Snyder?" "Yes." "Well, you got the most votes. You're the chairman!" [laughter] And I was a complete stranger to all of them as they were to me!

We had a meeting in North Carolina. I think some of them had already made the arrangements for a meeting place where the executive committee was to meet. I went up there and met with them, and we organized the Carolinas Group.

Lage: Do you recall any of these people? Are any of them still active in the club?

Snyder: Yes, they are. We organized, and we got a secretary, a conservation chairman, and an outings chairman. I can remember Charlie Andrews was the conservation chairman, Jane Stevenson was the secretary, and Larry Harrington was the outings chairman. We may have one or two others, but that is the most I can remember. There was a girl there named Mary Stephenson who did things and was later treasurer. She is still up there. Every now and then I hear from her. She is still hitting a lick every now and then.

Lage: Did any of these people have contact with the national office?

Snyder: Yes, Larry Harrington had led a trip or had been an assistant leader on a backpack trip, and they had been in contact with the office to get the list of members in the Carolinas to do this election. They had done all of the work. They were the ones that had the idea of organizing something in the Carolinas and, by this quirk of fate, I was thrown in to be in charge of it. We organized, and I knew something about how to organize things. We struck out and nothing happened--not a damned thing! We had a beautiful structure and nothing happened. I got hold of Harrington and said, "When are the outings coming?" Nothing, nothing. Finally, I wrote him mad and said, "Damn it, if you can't put on one outing a month, I'll do it myself!" I didn't know a thing about it. We were just groping our way along.

Focusing on Local Preservation Issues

Snyder: [In February, 1969] George Alderson, chairman of the Potomac Chapter in Washington, D.C., wrote me a letter. He said, "You all have been a group for three or four months, a number of months. Why aren't you doing something for conservation?" It shocked the hell out of me!

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Snyder: George is still in Washington, still doing things. He is working for BLM [Bureau of Land Management] now. He is a real conservationist. Well, getting that letter I had thought we had done a damn good job just to get a structure put in place, and here he was demanding conservation action! Anyhow, we had a meeting about what we could do, what needs to be addressed. We looked around and realized that there were three or four things that were really big issues. The designation of the Chattooga River as a wild and scenic river was just beginning to get studied. It was a study river and the study was just about to get underway. Somehow we had heard of something going on up in the mountains about Slickrock Creek. The Forest Service was going to build a road, and the Trout Unlimited people had sent a letter wanting to know if we would help them. There were some other issues. We found three issues. The third was the threatened second trans-mountain road in the Smokies.

We organized the Chattooga River Task Force. We found three people to work that. We knew nothing about Slickrock Creek, so we got the outing chairman to schedule an outing to see if we could find the darn place! [laughter]

Lage: It sounds like that all of this took place completely divorced from the national office.

Snyder: Oh, yes, nobody knew a thing about the national office, but we commenced to throw the name around. I went to some kind of hearing on the Chattooga River and stood up and proclaimed I was the chairman of the Sierra Club group. I noticed that it had some sort of an impact and that there was some power here. Then we started getting the bit in our teeth and realized that we could do something. We started weighing in and really moving things.

About that same time, I met Ernie Dickerman. Ernie came through Greenville. I don't know how he found out about me. He had phoned me and said, "I'm Ernie Dickerman. Can I come talk to you?" He came up to my office. We talked about the Chattooga River. We must have talked all afternoon about nothing else. I had grown up in Walhalla and the Chattooga River is one boundary of the county. I had fished in the river as a kid and swum in it. That was my stomping ground.

Snyder: I was on Dickerman's phone list after that. He was the eastern field representative for the Wilderness Society. He used to call all the time. We got to be great friends. He influenced me quite a bit.

Club Expansion and the Growth of Preservation Activities

Snyder: The club just expanded and expanded. Harrington finally got cranked up to doing some outings, and we suddenly discovered that every outing, we would recruit half a dozen people. It was just amazing. People were clamoring to join the Sierra Club. We commenced to grow at a phenomenal rate.

Lage: Was it mainly word of mouth? Friends coming in or did you advertise?

Snyder: We got a newsletter going. We got some newspaper publicity about outings going. I can remember talking people into joining just on the side of the road! I saw one fellow standing on the river looking at it. He was digging up a plant to transplant, and we got to talking, and I said, "I'm in the Sierra Club. Why don't you join?" He said, "I've heard of that. I want to do it." It was just word of mouth more than anything else.

Lage: What would you say were their motivations?

Snyder: The same as ours. I think they wanted to go on outings, and I think they wanted to save some of these places for outings. Gee, I hadn't thought of that in so long.

Lage: It is kind of an interesting phenomena.

Snyder: Every outing we'd sign up a multiple number of new members. It was just phenomenal.

Lage: The time was right for this.

Snyder: That was the time of the great growth of the environmental movement all over the country. You can't say how much of it was local influence and how much of it was the mood of the times.

Lage: What type of people were coming in?

Snyder: Just like the people in the club everywhere, the same typical club person--the professional person, the teachers, the people from the cities--the typical profile of a Sierra Club person. When they elected me, we had 140 members in the two Carolinas. For the next four or five years we doubled that every year. That's the way it grew. Of course, as we got new members we really started moving in on the environmental issues, particularly the preservation thing. We got the

Snyder: Chattooga River through. We got more and more people working on that and got the bill passed. Then we went to work on the Slickrock Wilderness and beat the road out of there [See Chapter X]. We worked on the eastern wilderness bill. We got the Congaree Swamp campaign started and got a wilderness designated in the Cape Romain Wildlife Refuge. We were not doing it deliberately, but more and more leaders came to the fore, and we just got little campaigns going everywhere.

III. EMERGENCE AS A NATIONAL SIERRA CLUB LEADER

Early National Contacts and Perceptions

Snyder: After two years we decided the Carolinas group was big enough to become a chapter. We filed a chapter application and turned the Carolinas group into the Joseph LeConte Chapter.

Lage: When was that?

Snyder: In October, 1970.

Lage: Did the controversy in the club in '69 with [Dave] Brower leaving have any impact or were people aware of it?

Snyder: I was very much aware of it. It was entirely by virtue of the campaign material. I didn't know any of them though, just what I read. But I sent a donation to the "good guys," to the anti-Brower people.

Lage: What do you think made you side with them?

Snyder: Fiscal responsibility entirely. I don't know why, but their mail material persuaded me, so much so that I sent them money.

Lage: George Alderson was running on the other ticket.

Snyder: He was on the other side, yes.

Lage: So it wasn't Dave Brower and the publicity--running the full page ads and things--that created the interest in the South.

Snyder: No, I don't think so because those full-page ads probably were not seen. How many people take the New York Times and the Washington Post? Almost nobody.

Lage: It was a grassroots interest.

Snyder: Yes.

Appointment to the Regional Vice-Presidency

Lage: Do you want to give us a little background on the steps that led to more involvement with the national scene? You were appointed regional vice-president.

Snyder: Yes, let's see how that happened. I had gotten into the wilderness movement, and that's what I was doing. We had organized the Joyce Kilmer Wilderness Advocates and were trying to get this wilderness area over in far western, remote North Carolina. I was the chairman and was really doing it all. I had a big network of people, and we exchanged information.

Lage: Were these non-club members as well?

Snyder: Yes, I had all the little conservation clubs, and there were a bunch of them around then--the Carolina Mountain Club in Asheville, North Carolina, which was a hiking club, the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club in Knoxville [Tennessee] which was a hiking club, Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Protection at Oak Ridge, the Tennessee Eastman Hiking Club which was over in Kingsport, Tennessee, the Carolina Bird Club which was the big bird club in the two Carolinas, and the Trout Unlimited people. There were a lot of esoteric trout fishermen down there and a whole bunch of people like the Holston Valley Conservation Congress. There were some guys over in Tennessee who organized so-called conservation organizations. They were all one-man entities, and they'd get letterhead printed [laughter] and it would be one guy! He'd have a letterhead that would look like a huge, tremendous organization. We had two or three of those going.

I guess I had twenty-five or thirty people in my network, and we were always trading information. But there were a lot of real membership entities, and we would get up things to mail out, and we would piggyback things in all of the newsletters--alerts and that sort of stuff when we were doing a campaign.

The club had a wilderness conference in Washington [in 1971]. They asked me to make one of the speeches, and I did. I made a hell-raising speech. I accused the chief of the Forest Service, John McGuire, who had spoken earlier, of deliberately giving misinformation, which he had. I stomped and pounded my fist and all of that stuff and got everybody to cheer and raise hell! [laughter] And that made me feel good.

The board was meeting, and [William] Futrell had been the regional vice-president for the Appalachian region. That was the meeting that Ansel Adams resigned [as board director], and they put Futrell in his place. They elected me or appointed me to take his place as vice-president [for the Appalachian region].

Lage: By virtue of this speech?

Snyder: No.

Lage: Had you gotten to know them a bit?

Snyder: No, I didn't know a one of them. [I imagine I was elected regional vice-president because of the tremendous growth, first in the group and then the chapter. Also, I was elected because I was becoming known in club circles as a strong and outspoken advocate for wilderness and because Bill Futrell and Ray Sherwin were on the alert for ways to advance club leaders up the ladder. T.A.S., March 27, 1981].

I can remember sitting in the meeting. They were going through the budget. Ed Wayburn was objecting line by line!

Lage: Ray Sherwin mentions meeting you. As president he came out and visited.

Snyder: I met Ray the first time when I came out to the board meeting [in 1970] to present the chapter application. Ray was secretary. It was a meeting at the Clair Tappaan Lodge. Chuck Huestis was on the board. He was treasurer. He was at Duke [University] at the time. He still is at Duke. He is their chief financial officer. He's more of the California rock climbing crowd, the "Bay Gang." I had met him, but I didn't know him except to know who he was.

Lage: Didn't Sherwin come out while he was president?

Snyder: Yes, when Ray was president he came to Charlotte to an annual meeting of the chapter and made a speech for us. He came up to the house where I live now. We took him and Janet on a canoe trip down the Chattooga River. They didn't know how to canoe. We put each one in a separate canoe and took them as passengers. We had two Clemson [University] students carrying Ray. Ray [a superior court judge] went through some ferocious rapid and came whizzing out the lower end. They shouted as they came smiling through at the bottom, "Here comes de judge!" [laughter] There was some television show at that time in which that phrase was popular. Everybody got a great charge out of that.

So I got to know Ray and liked him. But the others, I can't remember being very close to many of the others.

Lage: Did you have a sense that the "Bay Gang," as you put it, was somewhat exclusive and not willing to expand?

Snyder: I didn't have any perception at all one way or the other. I found being vice-president a very useful thing. I learned to manipulate that title. I made a lot of hay with it in that part of the country, throwing the weight of the club around and using that title to give it weight.

Election to the Board of Directors

Snyder: I was regional vice-president for a couple of years, and the nominating committee asked me [in 1973] if I would be willing to run for the board of directors. I said I would. I think George Shipway was chairman.

Lage: Of the nominating committee?

Snyder: Yes. Anyhow, I ran and was first runner-up the first time I ran. I know George was the chairman the next time. He asked me, "Will you run again?" This was in 1974. I wrote him a one-line letter, "Yes, indeed." Noncommittal and neutral as hell. [laughter] No enthusiasm at all in that. I led the ticket the next time when I got elected.

Lage: You weren't that well known, were you?

Snyder: Well, I had begun to be because the regional vice-presidents came to the board meetings. I remember, we had our own table at the board meetings, and we had gotten an RCC [Regional Conservation Committee] organized. I guess we turned into RCC chairmen. I was very vocal. All the time I was putting in an oar on what was going on. We had some furious arguments about the eastern wilderness which was a big thing there. I was always leading the pack for the hard-line. So maybe I did get to be known in circles in California.

Lage: You were on the wilderness committee and the land-use committee.

Snyder: Ray Sherwin made me chairman of the land-use committee.

Lage: Was that a very active committee?

Snyder: I was the first chairman. Ray organized it. It was a very active committee. We drafted and got adopted all of the land use policies while I was chairman. I was chairman for two years [1972-1974]. That was hard. I can remember wondering a time or two whether or not I was in over my head trying to come up with comprehensive land-use policy. We stuck to it and had a good committee.

Lage: Did you have experts on the committee?

Snyder: Yes, we did. There were two or three good experts who were doing that as a profession.

Lage: When did you get together? Was there a budget for you to meet?

Snyder: Yes, we had two meetings a year. All of the issue committees were then budgeted to meet twice a year. We had two good meetings a year. We would meet for two solid days. We did heavy work. As soon as my term ended on the land-use committee, I was elected chairman of the wilderness committee [1974-1976]. Then somehow I was elected to the board [in 1974].

Experiences as a Club Officer: Some Reflections

Lage: You were really getting involved by the time you were elected president. It must have taken up a substantial part of your life.

Snyder: I was very involved, yes. All my evenings I was doing Sierra Club stuff. I was either leading outings on weekends or out doing field work in these wilderness places we were fighting for. Every night when I was at home during the week I was turning out hundreds of letters, copies of which I have.

Lage: It sounds like this really struck a chord.

Snyder: It did.

Lage: Can you say what that was?

Snyder: I don't know. I've often asked myself, "Do you hate your father?" [laughter]

Lage: Was it the political aspect of it? You mentioned you were interested in politics.

Snyder: It was submerged. I never looked on it as politics. It was something else. I think I got a sense of achievement from seeing--particularly with wildernesses--something happen. I started testifying on wilderness bills and sending in testimony and going to Washington and learning how to lobby. I saw acts pass that I had been lobbying on, and I realized that I was having some small amount of influence on things. As I saw that I was successful, I kept getting bolder.

Lage: The way you've described it, you did have a very bold approach.

Snyder: Yes, I think lawyers have that kind of approach. I think being a lawyer was at least half of what gave me the boldness because I was used to it. The practice that I was in was almost exclusively a trial practice, and to try cases you've got to be bold. I was accustomed to trying cases hard and fast. Lawyers who try cases develop a pattern of speaking and hyperbole and exaggeration because you have to. That's how you persuade in that kind of case, by stretching things. I was quite comfortable doing that, so I did it.

Snyder: As president I got letters from people criticizing me because of that approach to things. They thought that you don't make progress by fighting, that there is a scientific way to do it, that you get the experts, and they calmly figure out the answers. I don't know how to handle that because I don't always trust the experts. The emotions aren't figured into those calculations.

Lage: Is there a lot of mail along those lines?

Snyder: I do [get] a fair amount, yes.

Lage: How about among club leadership? Were there any objections there?

Snyder: No, not from the leadership. Anyhow, that's part of my style. Being bold and being forward and stating the strongest case was not foreign to me. I felt comfortable doing it, and I still feel comfortable doing it.

Lage: Aside from feeling comfortable, do you think it's most effective?

Snyder: From a pragmatic point of view it is because that's the way Congress works. They pay the most attention to those that squawk the loudest and not to the calm, scientific approach.

Lage: What about when you called John McGuire on the line?

Snyder: Well, he had given me the opening. He deserved it. I didn't do it just to make a splash. But he had made a very deceptive speech and was very anti-eastern wilderness. We were fighting for some eastern wilderness areas. The Forest Service was denying that there was anything in the East that qualified for wilderness. McGuire had misrepresented the way the [Eastern] Wilderness Act had stated some things, and I just called him on it.

Lage: It's interesting because it seems to be a theme running through the club, this tension between the different approaches or styles to conservation tactics. That was a theme in the sixties. Perhaps it has resolved itself now.

Snyder: Being involved in the club has been fun. I have derived a great measure of enjoyment from all of it. I certainly wouldn't have done it with the energetic spirit that I have if I hadn't been deriving a great deal of pleasure from it.

Lage: Is it fun because of the group involved and the spirit in which things are done?

Snyder: I've never thought about it. It was fun for a number of reasons. It was fun because there was a sense of accomplishment. It was fun because I was working with friends who were agreeable, and we were in

Snyder: it together, and we were fighting the good fight. We were sharing things, we were learning things together. It was fun because we were enjoying the out-of-doors. We were going to wilderness places and sharing in the discovery of all these great new things.

Lage: Let me just ask one more question. What was your perception of the board when you were a new member? How did you perceive the workings of the board and their acceptance of you.

Snyder: I never questioned their acceptance of me. I assumed that I was an equal and acted accordingly. I had been a board watcher as vice-president and RCC chairman for at least a couple of years. As a derivative of the Brower days, I had some very strong feelings about fiscal responsibility, and I can remember at the first board meeting I drafted two or three very strong resolutions which passed. Lowell Smith helped me on them. The resolutions set fiscal policy which is still the policy of the club. I was right in there pulling my share of the weight from the minute I was elected.

Lage: You became an officer almost immediately, didn't you?

Snyder: Yes. Claire Dedrick, who was vice-president, resigned when she was appointed to a position in the state government, and they elected me vice-president to fill her term out. I guess that must have happened in my second year on the board. Then I ran for vice-president the next year and was elected. I did a term and a half or two-thirds as vice-president. I didn't do anything as vice-president, whereas as a regional vice-president, I had really been able to exercise the title and really make hay. As vice-president of the club, the president made no use of me, and the weight of the title was just not exercised. I don't know whether it's his fault or mine, but I perceived no way to utilize it, to make waves with it.

Lage: That's what happens with most vice-presidents on all levels!

Snyder: Well, that may be true. It's easy.

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IV. ELECTION AS SIERRA CLUB PRESIDENT, 1978

[Interview 2: November 13, 1980]##

Board Procedures for Selecting Club Officers

Lage: Could you tell me how officers are selected? I think it's something people know in the club, but it is probably not written down anywhere.

Snyder: I'm not sure it's even well known in the club. The only thing that's known is that the board selects the officers from among their own number. Starting about the time I was first elected a director, the board members were seeking a way to avoid the head-on, almost unresolvable conflicts in the election process with slates of candidates and nominating speeches and all the rigamarole that went with the formalities. The directors hit upon the idea of having all the directors go off to some place by themselves either a day or two before or about the same time as the annual meeting in May. They were to sit down and caucus among themselves and get the selections decided then.

Lage: Without an audience?

Snyder: Without an audience. Having gotten off by themselves, they struck upon the idea that instead of having nominations and nominating speeches, they would simply sit in a circle and go around the circle and those who wanted to run, would nominate themselves and would state what they wished to run for. Then having done that, all of the presidential candidates would make their own campaign speech. Then the board would vote and select and so on down through the various officers. This process has gotten refined so that by the time that I was beginning to be elected to various offices, the procedure went something like this. We established the idea of having what we called a pre-board meeting on the two to three days before the May meeting each year. We would go to some isolated place near San Francisco, most of the time to the West Point Lodge up on Mount Tam [Mount Tamalpais] and sit down and thrash these things out among ourselves.

Snyder: We would begin by sitting in a circle approximately, at least all in the same room together. First, we would go around the room and each person would state what they thought were the issues facing the club for the next year and what the major problems were we should address--the broad, general view of what they wished to see accomplished in the coming year. In the process of stating those things, each person would state what office or offices they would offer themselves as candidates for. It was not unusual for a person to offer for several offices, saying, "I want to be officer one first, and if I fail that, I'll offer for the next one," and so on. There was no opprobrium attached to that.

Then we would go back and take all of the persons who had stated they would offer themselves as president, and start with the top first. Each one of those would make a campaign speech of why he or she should be president. Each would be questioned by the other persons in the room as to what they would do, how they would respond to certain issues, where they would put emphasis here, there, and yonder, and so around that list of candidates. There were usually three or four candidates.

After the speeches had been made and the questions had been asked and answered, we would take votes and by consensus the person on each ballot with the lowest number of votes would be eliminated.

Lage: This really is a refined process.

Snyder: The selection process is not completely perfect because it regularly happened that a person or two or three persons at the bottom would be eliminated, but there would still be a deadlock. There would be one candidate ahead of the others, but there would be two or more with the same number of votes. We would take multiple ballots and recesses.

Lage: They wouldn't eliminate both?

Snyder: No, we didn't do it that way. We could have, couldn't we, and automatically have elected the person at the top. We continued to ballot until one person had the majority of the votes rather than eliminating both people that were tied.

Lage: That makes sense as the winner would have had the full support of the board.

Snyder: Yes. So on several occasions we took multiple ballots--ten, twelve--until either in the process of side conversations votes were changed or until someone, seeing that their chances were not improving, would withdraw.

Lage: Were deals made regarding the other offices?

- Snyder: No, I don't think so. At least I was never aware of it if they were. There may have been some tacit understandings. I think on one or two occasions there was a sense of giving the vice-presidency to the runner-up as the consolation prize, but I don't think it was done by previous agreement. I think it was done as a matter of conscience. That's the way we would do it. We would repeat the process with the vice-president and the secretary, the treasurer, and the fifth officer until the complete panel was selected.
- Lage: Are decisions made based on the program the person is offering--the ideals? Are their ideological differences?
- Snyder: There were ideological differences. There were differences of emphasis, there were differences in the approaches to problem-solving that different candidates would offer. Now, whether that made any difference in how the votes were cast is hard to say. I think as much depended on the character of the candidate and the experience that the board members had had in working with that person over the period that the candidate had been on the board.
- Lage: Are the board members very close with one another? Is there much camaraderie or sense of really knowing each other?
- Snyder: Not enough. When I first came on the board, there was very little sense of camaraderie. We tried through the medium of having board retreats in the summertime to try to get the board members off in an outing-type atmosphere out in the country where you would, in a relaxed way, talk about issues and start the process of getting to know each other's character and personality that makes for the kind of trust you need among people who have to work so closely together.
- Lage: You mentioned that when you came on the board, apparently there were a lot of conflicts over the election of officers.
- Snyder: There had been.
- Lage: Were you a party to any of these?
- Snyder: Not when I was a board member. I was an observer of that process when Ray Sherwin was elected to his second term, when he and Larry Moss were running against each other for president. In those days, the board would not commence to ballot until after the board meeting was opened on the Saturday morning of the May meeting. The directors would retire to a room by themselves to have a caucus. Of course, nobody except the ones who were in the room know exactly what happened, but there were a lot of reports! [chuckles] The report of that meeting said that the votes were deadlocked. It was seven to seven, and Dick Sill was voting for himself and wouldn't change. [laughter] It went on for ballot after ballot, and the other people who were there to attend the meeting were tired of waiting and worn out. It went on and on. People would

Snyder: come out and report; the board would take recesses, and some of the directors who were in the meeting would come out and get people like me--chapter chairmen and regional vice-presidents--to go and try to lobby other board members to change their votes. We, of course, did lobby, and we probably balanced each other out.

In that election Martin Litton finally came stomping out, mad as he could be. He either broke the tie by abstaining or by changing his vote--I really don't recall--but anyhow, he had been a supporter of Larry Moss. He changed his mind in whatever way he did, to throw the election to Sherwin. But he was mad!

Snyder's Platform and Personal Perceptions of the Role of President

Lage: Did your election have any interesting sidelights, or do you have any sense of why you were elected? What were your programs and goals?

Snyder: [laughs] I wish I could remember! [pause] I can remember one thing that was part of my so-called platform and that was that I had the capability to speak effectively to outside groups. I said I would go and make speeches and carry the flag.

Lage: Is the platform presented in these caucuses similar to the kind of statement that you make after you are elected?

Snyder: Very much so, yes. I can remember after that election enunciating to the board, or to the people, that I was a wilderness person. I expected much more wilderness to be established, and I would push for it. I named three or four wilderness places which were my top personal priority. My fatal mistake was omitting the Santa Monica Mountains. This immediately produced a resolution from the people down there condemning me for omitting it. They actually brought a resolution to the board to reaffirm its importance! [laughter]

Lage: So people listen!

Snyder: Yes.

Lage: Did you have an idea of how you wanted to function as a president? I don't mean program goals, but how did you conceive of the role of the president? I was thinking of how you tended to function. You mentioned one thing--sort of public relations. How did you intend to function as a leader of the board?

Snyder: I certainly intended to do a lot of personal lobbying which is again a conservation thing. I'm sure that I stated that I was on the East Coast and could easily go to Washington and would help whenever needed.

Snyder: I know that I made some swipe at improving staff relations. I had long thought that the president should go to some staff meetings. Not all of them; obviously, the staff belongs to the executive director, and the president should be cautious in the extent to which he becomes involved in staff guidance. But I felt that the president should go to some staff meetings or for some parts of staff meetings, so that the staff could question and give their opinions to the titular head of the volunteer side of the organization. I actually did do some of that.

Lage: Did you do it in Washington as well as in San Francisco?

Snyder: Yes, but it was mostly in San Francisco. I met with staff people and went to at least one staff meeting of the Washington staff. That was a small staff, and I knew them all personally anyhow. It wasn't like going to a staff meeting where you would have fifty people who were in San Francisco in the office, some of whom I didn't even know the names of because I hadn't been around.

Lage: Is that something the presidents had gotten away from? I know that attending weekly staff meetings was a practice in the sixties.

Snyder: It had been gotten away from completely by my presidency, so much so that it had been forgotten that presidents had once done it. I was not aware of it until you just told me! [laughs] Not attending staff meetings may have been a function of the fact that the presidents started to be from other parts of the country and weren't able to get to the meetings. I think it would be too much for a president to go to staff meetings weekly. I went at the time of board meetings. There was often a staff meeting several days after the board meetings, and I would stay and go to those. I think that was plenty.

Lage: But you seem to have a sense of not wanting to interfere with the executive director.

Snyder: Yes, I had a strong opinion that the staff people belonged to the executive director and that the chain of authority was from the executive director to the staff. I felt that the chain of authority should not be tampered with by the president going over the head of or around the executive director to give orders to the staff.

Lage: What about the other way? Did it ever happen that the staff would come to the president trying to go around the executive director?

Snyder: It had happened and there had been some problems with that. In fact, in trying to sort out the roles of the president and the roles of the board vis-a-vis the role of the executive director, the board at some point defined that as not proper. The board said that it was fine and expected that staff people would give information to the board. You have to have that kind of openness. Staff people have to be able to talk to board members who are interested. But for the staff people to

Snyder: undercut the executive director by going behind his back destroys the effectiveness of an organization. We had an agreement that that wouldn't be done, that board members would not let themselves be taken advantage of that way.

I think one of the things we did was the resolve to do that. It greatly strengthened Mike's [McCloskey]* confidence in his ability to run this place knowing that the board had confidence in him and would not let that happen to him.

Lage: Had that been a problem then?

Snyder: It had been a problem. There were certain staff people who consistently went to certain board members and tried to undercut and get behind Mike's back to do things. It was beginning to be a problem.

Three Areas of Influence and Power: The Board's Concept of the Presidency

Lage: Do you see the president, say in your term, as being an extremely powerful figure, a real leader of the board?

Snyder: Yes, I often would state my views of the roles of the president in speeches to chapters and to other people. We actually ended up articulating those in some documents that the executive committee adopted last year setting forth, in effect, the job description of the president. The president has three basic areas in which he exercises influence. One is [as] the representative of the club to the outside community. He makes speeches to other organizations at their conventions. He lobbies in Congress where he is the chief spokesman, or one of the chief spokesmen, because Mike is the other, probably with equal weight. But as at least one of the two top chief spokesmen for the club, he expounds to the public our policies and opinions.

The second area that the president exercises influence is in the relations between the board and the top leadership in the chapters and groups. I spent a substantial amount of time, and other presidents did too, in visiting the chapters and going to their meetings and making talks to them about what's going on at the top.

Lage: Did it work the other way, too? Did you get to listen to their gripes?

Snyder: Oh, yes, we did, but more than listening, it's an encouragement process, carrying the flag to the backwoods. There was certainly much to be carried back from chapter meetings, but I viewed it more as an out-reach process. I never refused to listen, of course. But my recollection is that there was not much in the way of griping. People were interested

*Sierra Club Executive Director, 1969-present.

Snyder: in knowing what the current things were that were going on on the board, what the club was going through administratively, and in getting the inside, up-to-the-minute, update on what was happening in Washington. It gave them a sense of participation, a sense of being a real part of the club, and I think that is very important--recharge the troops.

The third general area in which the president exercises influence is the actual administration of the office, the nuts and bolts details of running the board meeting, of structuring the agendas. The president has a fair amount of power in keeping things off the agenda that he thinks are not right and shouldn't go on it. He also may structure the agenda so that things that he thinks are less important get put at the end of the meeting where the board either gives it little attention or it is tabled, postponed, or whatnot. Clearly that was something that I did. I went about it very deliberately.

Lage: Would you actually manipulate requests from board members?

Snyder: Yes.

Lage: For agenda items?

Snyder: Oh, yes.

Lage: As well as from the council, the chapters?

Snyder: Right, I did, not in a Machiavellian sense, but it has to be done. You can't just put everything on the board agenda in the order that it comes in. You had to have some sense of priorities and importance and what would take the most time and what needed to be addressed when board members were fresh and what could be addressed when they were worn out and tired. I, like everybody else, had my own personal priorities. But that's why you have a president, to structure the meeting. The board always had the prerogative of redoing the agenda and moving things up or down. Sometimes things got moved around, particularly as people started to have to leave the meeting or to go home. We always were very flexible about changing the order of things. I always tried to put the most important questions before the board at times when the board members would be freshest.

Lage: Would you say that your interest in wilderness and desire to make that a priority was important in your being elected? Was this something that the board saw as a need also?

Snyder: Yes, I think so.

V. THE STAFF AND THE VOLUNTEER LEADERS: AN UNEASY BALANCE

The September 1978 Budget Crisis: The Board and the Staff in Conflict

Lage: Did you think about the question that I sent on to you about what the most charged issue was during your presidency? I thought if we could resolve how that was taken care of, we might find out more about how the board operates. Can you recall a particularly charged board meeting or issue?

Snyder: The most charged issue was the adoption of the budget in September of 1978. It's not an issue in the sense of a conservation issue that would be narrowly drawn. It was an issue in the sense that the budget process, by virtue of where it puts the money, is a priority setting assessment process for the whole club. To dwell on that a minute, 1978 was a year in which there wasn't enough money to go around. Too many people who had special interests were unable to put their personal interest behind the good of the whole club. We went from one impasse to another.

Lage: Give us a little background about how the budget was drawn up. What happened before the board meeting? How was it brought to the board?

Snyder: The budget was prepared by the budget committee which met about two months before the board meeting.

Lage: Now, is that volunteers?

Snyder: That's volunteers with the staff there. The staff and department heads had to be a part of that to give them the expenses and the income.

Lage: Who is on the budget committee?

Snyder: Denny Shaffer was the chairman,

Lage: He was the treasurer?

Snyder: He was the treasurer, and I can't name who the other members were, but they were all volunteers.

Lage: Were you involved in this also?

Snyder: No. They drew up a budget proposal, but it was out of balance a number of thousands of dollars. My recollection is \$400,000, but I might be wrong. It may have been \$200,000. Anyhow, it was substantially out of balance.

Lage: Because they couldn't deal with the question of what to eliminate?

Snyder: The budget committee decided that they could not balance it because in order to balance it, they would have to make decisions about cutting programs. That would be a matter of determining priorities, and that they didn't want to do. That was something the board should do. They submitted a proposed budget that was far out of balance. There was a general agreement that the budget would have to be balanced.

The board meeting in September went about the process of closing that gap and, as is always the case, first we went through all of the expenses, and the gap widened. [laughter] We went through the income, and the income simply wasn't there. Obviously cuts had to be made. The process of being able to do that turned out to be virtually impossible.

Lage: How did it resolve itself then? You said that individual board members weren't willing to give up their personal projects.

Snyder: That's right.

Lage: Can you give examples?

Snyder: Not without going back and looking at my notes. But people would present packages for amounts of money, cutting here and cutting there. Totals and package after package were offered and all went down to defeat. We went around and around and nothing seemed to work. The staff people were mad.

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Lage: The staff, according to the minutes, was a little disgusted with the board for being unable to make these decisions.

Snyder: Yes, the staff was disgusted in the first instance because the board voted not to go through and set the priorities first as the budget committee had suggested. The budget committee suggested the board should spend some time, before we actually got to the numbers, deciding what the priorities were. The board voted not to do that, but to go directly into the budget process.

Lage: When this vote took place, did you try to convince the board members to continue with the agenda as you set it up?

Snyder: No, I didn't. I thought that they should set priorities first, and I had put the budget on the agenda early in the meeting so that the board could decide. Obviously the board had to be willing to undertake to do what the committee suggested.

Lage: As a group, they just weren't?

Snyder: A majority of them were unwilling to follow the committee's suggestions. That immediately put some of those who thought the board should set priorities first in a very bad frame of mind, and it put many of the staff in a disgusted frame of mind. As we went through the thing, it was obvious that we needed to have set priorities first because the various packages that were presented all would preserve the favorite bailiwick of the proposer.

Another thing that made the staff very mad was the way the salary part of the budget was handled. There was a lump sum amount allocation for wage increases and incentive pay in the budget, and that was attacked early and reduced quickly without much consideration for the effect on the staff. Of course, they sat there and saw it happening. So that was a setting of priorities by attacking the heart of the body politic of the club rather than doing it some other way. The staff was very exasperated.

I went to the staff meeting which was a couple of days after that, and they were in a bitter, foul mood. I sat and listened to them for an hour or an hour and a half as they expressed themselves. Some good things came out of it. It was not a personal attack on me, so I didn't feel endangered. They were disgruntled because of the process and their feeling of noninvolvement or of having their recommendations being ignored. As a result of that, we started to find ways to improve the process. Shortly after that, I guess the next board meeting, we had a block of time set aside for the staff to talk to the whole board. The staff came, and the board sat. I wouldn't let the board say anything, but let the staff talk to the board for an hour or something like that.

After that, obviously, there was no way for the board to answer in the time that was available. We broke up into small groups for another period of time, and I sent one or two board members off with five or six staff members in small groups to go and have the discussions where the board members could respond. That started the process of consultation or at least sharing information. In the budget process since then, there is a deliberate effort to see to it that the staff was consulted and they knew what was going on.

Snyder: We also started about that same time, as part of the response, a personnel committee composed of three board members to whom the staff people could come and talk. They had a number of meetings and found out some of the specific gripes and points of dissatisfaction and started doing things to correct them. That's been a helpful thing, and that's still going on.

Lage: Would you say staff morale has improved then?

Snyder: I think the morale of the staff has improved dramatically. This was a sour, bitter place in September of 1978. Now if you go around, people seem to be happy and satisfied. I think the morale has dramatically improved, and it looks like it has solidified, and it's a good place to work now.

Lage: That's quite an accomplishment.

Hiring an Administrator: A Question of Staff Autonomy

Snyder: I try to think as we do all of this, what was the most charged conservation issue, and I can't think of a conservation issue on which there was a real division. Most of the votes on that were pretty clear.

Lage: So there is considerable consensus.

Snyder: There is considerable consensus. The most charged issue in terms of an issue was not on the conservation side. It was on the question of how we went about--or whether we would employ--an administrator for the club. It was about the process of selecting the administrator.

Lage: That was a charged matter before the board?

Snyder: Yes.

Lage: That occurred around the same time as the budget controversy in 1978, didn't it?

Snyder: It was early, but it came afterwards.

Lage: What was the opposition to employing an administrator?

Snyder: It meant adding money to the budget, but the opposition was not so much opposition to employing him, but deciding that the board would not employ the administrator but the executive director would employ him. Before, most of the top staff people would be selected by the board and given to the executive director. We had [management consultant] Nancy Stark, and she and Mike [McCloskey] went through an extremely elaborate

Snyder: process of describing the job function of the administrator. One of the things that I and some of the directors realized was that it would be a mistake for the board to select these top staff people; that Mike should select them. The top staff would then be his responsibility. Their failure, if they failed, would be his responsibility. That being so, he would have an incentive to not only select people that would succeed, but an incentive to see that they succeeded.

It was difficult to persuade the whole board that was the right change to make. We had a board meeting. Nancy Stark came to the meeting and made a long presentation to us about how it should happen. We went over and over that very issue.

Lage: Are these executive sessions where this type of thing was discussed?

Snyder: No, that was an open session.

Lage: Was it partly a lack of confidence in Mike or was it philosophical?

Snyder: I don't think it was aimed at Mike. I think the board as a body had no confidence in anybody. It was the sort of thing that pervades through the club and rises and falls. But it certainly wasn't aimed at Mike, although there were one or two directors that had low opinions of Mike. In that sense it was personal. But I think more than being personally aimed at Mike, it was the general inability to trust people plus the wish to retain power and have control. That again was because of the lack of trust in anybody else.

Lage: How far down in the organizational structure had the board begun selecting top people?

Snyder: They were selecting department heads, down to that level.

Lage: On the administrative level as well as in the conservation department?

Snyder: Yes. They were to have Mike bring to them the top two or three candidates, but then they would decide, not Mike.

Lage: Would he get to give the recommendation?

Snyder: Well, he was scared to [laughs], and so he refrained from doing that. Obviously, if he recommended a person and the board chose another one, that would put Mike and the board at odds over it, and Mike would have no incentive then. It set the club up for Mike to say, "Well, you all picked him, and he didn't work out. You picked a bad apple," and wipe his hands and say, "I'm sorry, you did it." and walk off. It wouldn't be his fault.

I can remember some sessions where we did that. I can remember particularly the board meeting where in closed session we voted on Paul Swatek and selected Paul from among two candidates who Mike had brought to us for the position of assistant conservation director.

Lage: Paul came from the volunteers as a former director.

Snyder: He was a director at the time.

Lage: Oh, he was a director at the time. Well, that makes it even more Byzantine!

Snyder: We had at that time a policy which was widely ignored that board members could not be elected to the staff. When the crunch came the policy was forgotten!

Lage: So what was the result of the controversy over the administrator? Did the board end up selecting the candidate?

Snyder: No, the board ended up agreeing that Mike must make the selection.

Lage: Didn't you say that you interviewed the final candidate?

Snyder: We interviewed the candidate, but not plural, the candidates. We had Mike submit his choice and then we interviewed him and either said, "Yes, that suits us too," or, "No, go find us another candidate." In this case, the board didn't interview him. One or two of us interviewed him. My recollection is that Denny Shaffer and I did it, and we did it at different times.

Lage: Has that worked out better now, do you feel?

Snyder: Oh, I think it's far superior because now Mike has control of his staff. He selects his staff.

Lage: Is this a new policy or just a passing phase?

Snyder: Well, I hope that we've learned that it's the best way to do things. So far it is being observed, and I think it will become a habit, and people will forget how difficult it was to make the change, to make that the rule.

Lage: An interesting evolution.

[Page 40a has been sealed until 1992]

[Sealed until 1992]

Lage: You mentioned to me when we had our informal meeting, that there are some bad feelings or bad relationships between individual board members and individual staff members.

Snyder: Yes, there are.

Lage: Is there something you want to comment on about those?

Snyder: Well, I don't mind blundering along and telling it all!

Lage: Especially if it has importance to the organization as a whole or to the conservation policy.

Snyder: Ellen Winchester was the board person that caused the most distress to me. She was chairman of the energy committee. Immediately upon becoming president, the members of the staff who were the energy people, came to me and told me that they couldn't work with her. They said she demanded things of them--too much too often; that she was on their backs constantly, and that they had had all they could take, and I had to replace her.

I talked to Bill Futrell, who was my predecessor, about it. During all of his tenure as president, he and Ellen had been at each others throats at every meeting. I finally decided something had to be done. It is always hard to fire a volunteer! [laughter]

Lage: She was also on the executive committee, wasn't she?

Snyder: I think you are right. She was secretary. At any rate, I talked to her about it. I talked to some of the staff people, and they told me, "Frankly, it's difficult. If you make us work with her, we'll do it. But we don't want to."

Finally, in talking with her, I told her that the staff people were scared of her and that it was causing problems. She was surprised and shocked, she said, to learn that. She thought that she and they had been working together very smoothly. This may have been true from her point of view, although she had told me that she was having difficulty getting some of the staff to return her calls. The staff people told me they wouldn't do it because they knew what was coming.

So we finally got her to agree to resign effective the end of the calendar year. I appointed Susan Steigerwalt to take over from her.



The Working Relationship between the Staff and Committee Chairs

- Lage: How are the staff and a major committee chairperson supposed to work together? Are the staff people in any way assistants to the committee chair?
- Snyder: Well, they should be. There is nothing written down on how they must act toward each other. Each area of major concern or each issue area that the club addresses has staff people who were assigned to that issue or area. So, for energy, there are two energy people on the staff in Washington, and there is an energy person on the staff in San Francisco. These staff people are the ones who supposedly support the committee. Of course, the board also sets priorities and the committee and the staff people have a lobby and do all those things based on the priorities. Ideally the staff person and the committee chair would be working together in tandem, and it would be the duty of the staff person to keep the committee chairman informed of what was going on and where help was needed and what needed to be done. It would be the duty of the volunteer committee chairman to tell the staff person what the volunteers thought. Obviously, it is a very theoretical, ideal way to make it work together.
- Lage: Does the committee chairman have the right to request the time of the staffers, to set out the job duties?
- Snyder: No, that's a conflict that's still going on. Some of the committee chairmen insist that they have the right to direct the time of the staff person. They want to set the staff person's priorities and to call the tell the staff person what to do next. That won't work because the staff person is an employee of the executive director, and the staff people have got to receive their overall supervision and direction from the head of the employees. It's a problem because if the volunteer structure is to have the support it needs, there has to be some way for the volunteer structure to influence the staff person in its field. It's a controversy that is still going on. It hasn't been resolved yet. The height of the controversy varies with the ability of the staff and volunteer people to work together. Sometimes the relationship is symbiotic, and there is no problem in that everything is smooth. Sometimes it's not. and they are at each other's throats.
- Lage: Is there ever a problem with the volunteer trying to have someone discharged?
- Snyder: I can't remember any instance like that. No, I don't believe the volunteers have ever tried to have somebody fired.

Communication between Executive Director and President

Lage: How did this interfacing between the volunteer and the staff work at your level at the top, between the president and the executive director?

Snyder: It worked fairly well. It could have worked better in my judgment. But it worked smoothly enough to make the business of the club go on. The problem is that by having a president who is head of the volunteers, in effect, and having the executive director who is head of the staff, you have created in semblance, if not in fact, two chiefs for one business. Unless they work together in a very special way, they could be pulling in different directions and be giving different signals to the people who work under them. What I did when I first took office was to ask Mike, the controller, and Brock Evans, who was the chief of the Washington office, to call me periodically. I asked them to call every week or every ten days, not to have a mechanical schedule but to call me on a fairly regular basis and to tell me what was going on. The only one that ever did that with any fidelity was Brock Evans. Mike would call me, but his calls were much further apart than every week or ten days. I didn't call him as much as I should have probably.

Lage: When he called you, what kind of things would he bring up?

Snyder: He would tell me what was going on. He would call me to get my advice on problems that needed attention or on things that the president, as head of the volunteers, should decide. He would call on questions of policy that had to be decided so that instructions could be given to the staff who were lobbying where there was no policy. This happened when the board couldn't be convened, and it seemed like it was unnecessary to convene the executive committee or do a conference phone call.

Lage: He was careful to check matters of policy rather than setting policy?

Snyder: He was very careful about that. Mike has a prodigious memory of all of the policies. He also has a quite clear perception of where there isn't policy and when the volunteer people need to be consulted. I cannot fault him in any respect for that. He was meticulous in doing that. Now, it may be that we didn't need to talk any more than we did. As a practical matter, things went well enough so you could say we didn't. I would have felt more comfortable if he had called me more often. He may say he would have felt more comfortable if I had called him more! [laughter]

Anyhow, without attempting to say who's right and who's wrong, I think that our relation would have been better if we had talked to each other more often.

Lage: You make it sound as if it's almost like two separate worlds, each going about their own business.

Snyder: Well, it was like that. I think that goes back to the problem of having two heads of one organization. We were in a way on parallel tracks. He was commanding the staff, and they were lobbying and doing their things, and I was commanding the volunteers, and we were lobbying on the same things. I felt like I would have been happier if we had consulted together more often. As I say, things went all right. You can't say that we didn't do enough.

The Executive Director as Conservationist and as Administrator:
An Assessment of Mike McCloskey

Lage: How would you assess Mike, as you see him, as a conservationist and as an administrator for the club?

Snyder: Mike always said that he disliked administration. I think that, although he spent a prodigious amount of time reading books on administration and business management and devoted himself to studying and learning it, he disliked it so much that he never was a good manager or a good administrator. That's what makes me think that employing an administrator to take that burden off of him was the major accomplishment of the last two or three years. Mike's abilities are as a conservationist. We were being shortsighted in not giving him administrative relief so that we could use his talents where his talents really lay. We're doing that now.

Lage: Was he happy with the decision to have an administrator?

Snyder: Yes, I think so. I think he questioned it for a long time before he finally came to the realization that it would improve things for him.

Lage: I've heard criticism of the tone that Mike set, which was not quite as aggressive or as flamboyant as some would like. What are your thoughts along those lines?

Snyder: He is a low-key type person as a conservationist, and you've got to get to know him that way. I think he has strengths that we would be hard pressed to replace and probably couldn't. He is the best person I have ever known with an ability to think ahead five or ten years, to foresee with accuracy what new issues are going to come along.

Lage: [laughs] Did he foresee the last national election?

Snyder: I don't know. I wish I knew! I don't think anybody foresaw the tide of dissent that was going to be expressed, although perhaps the signs were there.

But Mike is able to think ahead. He's got the opportunity now--and he's doing it--of going back to Washington. Before he got burdened with the administrative duties in the San Francisco office, he went to Washington fairly regularly. He had his own circle of contacts there, which is how you do things. He interchanged or interfaced with them, and they gave him information, and he gave them information. That helped him keep his finger on the pulse of things.

When he became tied down in administration in the San Francisco office he couldn't go to Washington, so his network collapsed. Now that we've taken that off of him, he is able to go more frequently, and he is rebuilding that ability.

Lage: How does the San Francisco office relate with the Washington office? Are there conflicts there, or is there pretty smooth cooperation?

Snyder: I think it's a fairly smooth operation. There were conflicts as to what the role of Brock Evans should be [as director of the Washington office].

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I know there was some conflict between Mike and Brock, not directly from them but from other people who talked about it. This is illustrative of Mike's approach to things as an administrator more than anything else. It just demonstrates that Mike basically has no feel for administration. Brock was supposed to do something with one of the other people in the office--Chuck Clusen, as I recall. Brock and Chuck were unable to decide on some division of the turf between them, who was to do what. Mike, as executive director, called Brock in and told him that he and Chuck must sit down and decide it between themselves. Mike said that he was not going to give either one of them a raise until they got that settled. It was perfectly plain, however, that they were at loggerheads, and they would never get a raise because they couldn't agree. What Mike should have done was to sit down with the two of them so that they were all in one room. Mike would have said, "Now, each one of you tell me what your trouble is, and we ain't leaving until we get this sorted out." He could have helped them.

There are times when you can't force your subordinates to make the decision; you have to do it yourself. That's one example. Another example is that we were at one point employing some new people in Washington as replacements for people who had left. Mike had told Brock to prepare job descriptions for them. Brock did it, but his whole concept of what was in a job description and his approach turned out to be completely foreign to what Mike had in mind. That caused great pains and anxiety because they just never saw eye to eye on what they were doing, and neither one could see what the other one was trying to do. Maybe they were both stating things unclearly. Certainly that

Snyder: created a problem and a tension there. In fact, at one time I wondered if Mike wasn't forcing Brock to make mistakes so that if Brock quit in frustration or was fired, Mike would say, "Look at all these things he did that demonstrate that he really should go."

Lage: How did the Brock-Clusen controversy resolve itself? Did the board get involved in that?

Snyder: No, it's gotten resolved by Mike reorganizing the Washington office. He brought in some new people and it's changed Brock's job. It's given Brock the title of associate executive director. Instead of leaving Brock in charge of conservation activities in Washington, it's made him an outreach person. Brock is in charge of liaison to other conservation organizations. His job, in part, is raising funds--a public relations type job. As a matter of fact, that was a good administrative decision because that emphasizes and takes advantage of Brock's strength. That's what he's good at. He is much better at it than at lobbying because he's good at public relations. He's good at meeting people and persuading people. He's not as good at organizing a campaign. He doesn't organize a campaign in a detailed, logical manner. He sees an idea, and he emphasizes that, whereas Doug Scott, who is there now, is a meticulous, thorough person who will organize a campaign and break it down into pieces and put the right emphasis on every piece. Brock is now in this position where he should be. In doing that he had been moved into position where he appears to have lost some of his powers, or at least it gives that appearance to the people he has dealt with. It's a face-losing type of change from Brock's point of view. He's been worried about that. Plus, anytime that you change directions in a job and get into doing a whole new different thing, you have to go through all of the self-doubts as to whether you can succeed. You have to prove yourself in something new, whereas he was proven and satisfied in what he had been doing.

That created some tensions and some strong discussions back and forth. I think if Brock looks on it right, and he stayed on so I think he's doing it, he really should see it as an opportunity to do what he does best.

President and Executive Director as Joint Decision Makers

Lage: Were you president when Brock Evans was made associate executive director?

Snyder: Yes.

Lage: Was this a totally mixed decision? I'm trying to see what the president gets involved in. Were you involved in that?

Snyder: Yes, I was involved in that in the sense that Mike consulted me about it as he went along. It took six or eight months, and then as he got his ideas solidified on how he wanted to reorganize the Washington office, he submitted that to the board in confidential documents outlining what he was planning and got our reactions to it. But it was never presented to us for us to make the decision, but by him as executive director telling us what he proposed to do. The way he and I consulted about it was deciding how we were going to present it to the board, so that the decision remained Mike's. He and I agreed--or maybe it was me telling him, that was how I was going to do it. I think it probably is more the latter way. I said, "Now, look, I am not going to put it on the agenda for a decision. I'm going to put it down for you to advise the board so that you can hear what kind of reaction they make. You can fine tune it depending on what you hear, but the decision is going to be yours." And that's the way we did it.

Mike came to executive committee with it first. I was intent on keeping the board and the executive committee from taking the decision away from him, but I wanted them to be informed at the same time and to give him their opinions. That's the way we worked it. I kept it from being a decision item on the agendas. Again, that goes back to the sort of thing that the president can do. I had the strong feeling that it should not be a decision matter for the board. I structured the agenda so it never became that.

Lage: A different president might have handled it very differently. It could have become a political issue.

Snyder: That was just because of my personal perception of how the roles of the executive director should be played with his relations to his staff and his relations to the board.

Lage: Do you recall if this conception you had was something you brought out before you were president?

Snyder: No, I am sure that I did not have it until after I was president. It never became clear in my mind until Nancy Stark was here, and we were in the process of consulting with her in looking for Len Levitt, the administrator. That's when it worked its way into my conception.

Lage: I think we have a good picture of the relationship between staff and volunteers, at least during your presidency.

Improving Communication: An Experiment

Snyder: Let me tell you one thing I did that didn't work. The first year I was president, I thought that there was too little communication between Mike and the directors, so I set up on the occasion of each board meeting to have Mike and the executive committee go off together for supper on one of the days. I would make up little agendas of things that I thought the executive committee and Mike ought to discuss. These things were not on the public agenda; they were things that would help Mike and the board work together. I was very conscientious about doing that. I'd type up little agendas, and I'd go over them with Mike before the meeting so he didn't get taken by surprise by what we were going to do.

We did that for a year, but the suppers were always strained. It never jelled. It never fell into a form that looked like there was anything coming of it.

Lage: Were you hoping to develop more closeness and trust?

Snyder: Yes, that's what I had in mind. The second year we didn't do it. I just got the feeling that it wasn't working. It may have had some effect, but I don't think it worked. I don't think anybody on either side ever was interested enough or got enough out of them to really want to pursue them.

Lage: It was an effort, though.

Snyder: I pursued it doggedly! It just didn't jell.

VI. THE EVOLUTION OF SIERRA CLUB CONSERVATION POLICY

The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Club's Democratic Process

Lage: Let's turn back to the volunteer segment and talk a little bit about how policies are made, conservation policies. How democratic is the policy making? One thing that brought this to my mind was the question of nuclear policy where the board asked you to send a proposed policy down through the volunteer structure for comments. Is that routine?

Snyder: Yes. I think that the policy process was about as democratic as you could make it, although there is a certain strain of paranoia that runs through the volunteer segment that no amount of consultation would eliminate. It waxes and wanes too. Policy normally would be proposed by a committee--the energy committee would propose a nuclear waste policy, the wilderness committee would propose a wilderness management policy, the land use committee proposed a grand land use policy, one of the RCC's proposed an agricultural policy.

The originating committee would propose the policy and would submit it to the board with background and data. If the board perceived that it was controversial or important, then rather than adopting the policy or debating it immediately they would postpone consideration and send the policy or the proposed policy and all the background far and wide among the volunteer sector of the club for comments. They would appoint some person to collect the comments and synthesize them. Then at some subsequent meeting, which usually would be designated either the next meeting or the second meeting away, it would come back up. It would come with adequate notice and perhaps the policy would be even modified based on the comments. With the volunteer movement having been alerted to the fact that the policy was going to be debated and some policy adopted, with their having had the opportunity to submit comments in advance, and with the usual way our meetings were run, they had the opportunity to speak from the floor on the issue.

That's the way most broad and controversial policies are handled in the club. It's a time-consuming way, but it's an extremely democratic way. I've often described that the way the board acts is not like the board of directors of a corporation, but more in the nature of a legislative body.

Lage: Where does the scientific and technical expertise fit in here? It sounds as if you get a great deal of comment from the volunteers who may or may not be experts.

Snyder: The volunteer committees in most cases have experts in whatever the field they are working on right on the committee.

Large: As volunteers?

Snyder: As volunteers. Now, that's true of the energy committee. It's true of the land-use committee, for example, which has a number of land-use planners and land-use people as committee members. The expertise is [there]. They are volunteer club members, and the expertise is right there on the committee. Some committees don't need as much scientific expertise as others. The wilderness committee is an example of that where the members are more just trench fighters on wilderness issues. They have a kind of expertise, too. It's not the scientific kind as much, although since resource conflicts are a part of the wilderness thing, timber experts found their way in and different members became experts on forestry issues. We had people like Gordon Robinson who would come and help us.

We have one committee which is an expert committee, just on the side, and that's the economics committee. Again, the committee members are all club volunteers but every one of them is an economics professor somewhere, an economics expert. They do, to my way of thinking, an extraordinarily good job. They, almost at the snap of a finger, can produce expert treatises on almost anything you want--and they do all the time!

Lage: So the volunteers aren't necessarily amateurs.

Snyder: That's right.

Lage: They are professionals as much as the staff.

Snyder: Yes.

Lage: Have you ever felt--not just during your presidency because you can't give us a controversial issue in your time on the board--that this democratic process has made the decisions too slow in coming so that the staff has had a hard time lobbying, or the club hasn't kept up with a particular problem?

Snyder: No. I don't think so.

Lage: I recall you saying to me earlier, that when you were active in formulating the first energy policy the staff was after the board to make a decision. In the meantime, all this democratic decision-making process was going on, and the staff sounded as if they were really handicapped.

Snyder: No, on some; on no major issues. While I was president, there were some occasions when there would be voids in policy, and the staff would come to me, or Mike would come to me on their behalf, and say, "Look, such-and-such a bill is up, and we've got to know which position to take. It's important, and we need to." Then Mike and I or me or some combination of people would decide, based on analogous policies, that the board probably would come down such and such a way. I would then say, "Okay, take that position," and would report that to the board. Sometimes the board would agree, and sometimes they would disagree. I can think of a case where they disagreed when we were lobbying on some of the energy issues. One in particular was on price deregulation of gas. Based on analogous policy, I took a position that we were in favor of decontrol, or should be in favor, because we had expressed ourselves as being in favor of all costs being internalized, and decontrol would do that. I told them to go that route, and the board disagreed. We hadn't gone so far out on a limb that it made any difference.

I didn't hesitate to go ahead and do things like that and get them going. The policy was tightened from that point of view. Now, on another occasion I made a policy on the MX missile which was sustained. The whole thing reversed itself later on.

Lage: After hearing from other volunteers?

Snyder: Yes.

The Accommodation of Dissent

Lage: It sounds as if there is a good deal of consensus among the volunteer members.

Snyder: I think on conservation issues there is.

Lage: Do you ever come up with a dissenter who works him or herself up enough to be recognized at the higher levels?

Snyder: Yes, dissenters were always recognized.

Lage: I mean do they get enough power, build a power center? You just recently haven't seen that much dissent.

Snyder: We just haven't seen that much dissent.

Lage: I'm wondering if dissenters aren't made welcome at the lower levels, so they don't work themselves up, or is it that everybody just is in agreement?

- Snyder: I think it's more a question of agreement. Although occasionally you see the dissent. The dissent is on things--to give an example--on something like nuclear power. One of the groups in one of the chapters took a position on nuclear energy that was different from the board's policy.
- Lage: Was this during your term?
- Snyder: Yes, and we had to face how do you bring them around. One chapter took a position on nuclear power for electricity generation that was different from the board policy.
- Lage: Was this to the extent that they supported a nuclear reactor?
- Snyder: Well, they didn't support a plant. Their position was that you should not decommission nuclear plants. The stuff that was there had to be relied on and left alone. The board policy was that they should be decommissioned, and we weren't for them. It was a clear-cut divergence from the policy.
- Lage: How did it get resolved?
- Snyder: I think we decided there was nothing we could do about it except to see to it that the board policy was enunciated. They were told that they were not speaking for the club. There was almost nothing you could do. We finally decided that it was better just to do it in a low-key way than to drum them out.
- Lage: You were mentioning something else that came up also?
- Snyder: Another nuclear thing came up recently, but it wasn't in my term. It was the same thing. A particular person in a chapter made a statement on behalf of the chapter that nuclear plants weren't so bad! This was just completely contrary to policy.
- Lage: It's interesting because it wasn't very long ago that that was a controversial policy decision that the club made.
- Snyder: It was, that's right. A lot of staunch club people opposed the resolution that was adopted. Will Siri, for example, was in favor of nuclear power and lobbied hard for that position. If you are going to have a democratic organization, you have to follow certain rules, and it doesn't bother me to abide by decisions made in following the rules. That was one of the things that I was questioned about when I was first running for the president. I was asked some question about some feature of energy policy that I had voted against--I can't remember what it was--and my answer was that I would openly support all of the policy. If I had some personal disagreement with some particular aspect of the policy that made me uncomfortable, I wouldn't deny it. I would go and find somebody who felt comfortable to talk about it.

Lage: The president appoints the committee chairs, and I guess approves the rosters of the committee also.

Snyder: The executive committee approves it. Here's the way it works. There's a way the bylaws say it works, and the way it really works. The president appoints the committee chairs, and the committee chairs select the committee members and tell the president who they've selected. The president then goes through the exercise of appointing the committee members, although he really didn't select them. Under the bylaws, the president nominates these people, and they are confirmed by the executive committee. The executive committee from time to time goes through the role and ratifies all of these appointments made by the president. They always do it.

Lage: Is there any attempt to put dissenters on the committee with different points of view about energy policy, or do the chairmen tend to select people who agree with them?

Snyder: The chairmen tend to select people that agree with them. The energy committee did have some dissenters on it at one time. I'm not sure if they are all gone now or if views have changed so that they're not on there. At one time there were a number of dissenters on the energy committee. They worked within the committee structure; maybe one or two didn't.

Lage: Was that in recent times or when the policies were first being set up?

Snyder: Yes, in recent times.

VII. THE CLUB AND THE FOUNDATION

The Foundation and the Club at Odds

- Lage: I wanted to talk a little bit about the relations between the club and the Sierra Club Foundation. That came to something of a crisis during your presidency, didn't it?
- Snyder: The crisis was really before I was president while Bill Futrell was president.
- Lage: What was the problem?
- Snyder: The problem was that the foundation was not raising much money, and the money they raised, they were doing so inefficiently. The expenses were very large in relation to the amount of money raised. The club was raising most of the money. Since it was money that was tax deductible, the club's fund raisers had to channel it through the foundation. It was obvious that we'd be almost as well off if we had some way of bypassing the foundation and its high cost of operation. It was a serious problem that was giving us all kinds of financial problems.
- Lage: Were you a member of the board of trustees of the foundation?
- Snyder: No, I was just on the board of directors of the club. Bill Futrell was president. We decided to undertake negotiations with the foundation to try to get the foundation under control, to bring it under the control of the club. We worked to force the foundation to address these problems which they had not been addressing. I was on the negotiating team. It was me and Mike [McCloskey] and Dick Cellarius.
- Lage: Was this viewpoint shared by the staff?
- Snyder: It was shared by the staff, but not all the directors. It was controversial among the directors, but a fair majority were in favor of negotiating it in the position we took. The foundation's negotiators were Will Siri, Gary Torre, and Nick Clinch.

Snyder: We negotiated or--I think negotiated is a poor word to describe it. We had a series of meetings at which we attempted to negotiate, but it was more difficult than negotiating with the Russians. [laughter]

Lage: Were pretty strong characters negotiating?

Snyder: We were all headstrong people who were resolved not to budge an inch. So nothing came of the negotiations.

Lage: What was the club proposing? How much can you put the foundation under the club's control and still have it be tax deductible?

Snyder: We could have done it very easily. We were asking the foundation to allow the club to nominate enough directors or trustees so that the club would have an ability to influence the operations of the foundation. This would not have affected its tax deductible status at all.

Lage: You wanted some current club directors on the foundation board?

Snyder: Well, they didn't even have to be directors. All we wanted was the ability to nominate enough people so that the club's views would prevail. The foundation took the position, to generalize broadly, that the club's people were all wild spenders and that the foundation had to remain completely separate to protect the club from itself. The foundation couldn't trust the club to be wise husbands of the money. It was really the [Dave] Brower fight because Brower refused to save for a rainy day but spent everything first and then said, "It will come from somewhere."

Lage: But the club, in recent years, hasn't seemed to take that tack.

Snyder: The club hasn't done that in years, but that was the argument that the foundation used--that the volunteer people in the club would spend first and worry about the money later. The foundation said that there had to be some body of people who weren't and couldn't be so influenced, who would be there to bail the club out if these wild spenders spent the club into bankruptcy. Well, those were philosophical issues which were incapable of resolution as long as you held those opinions. So nothing happened. The meetings were not cordial.

Lage: Was there a lot of ill feeling then?

Snyder: Well, that's funny. I didn't go to the meetings with any sense of ill feeling, and I'm satisfied that neither Mike nor Cellarius had any feelings. We were determined; we were committed. We thought that we were simply talking in good faith, and it would be a matter of full and frank discussions, and we would respect each other's judgments and mental abilities and all that. But I don't think that was reciprocated. I told the board once, after one of their meetings, that it was the most personally distressing confrontation that I had ever been in. Will Siri was insulting on a personal basis. He turned aside when I offered to shake his hand and put his hands in his pocket.

Snyder: I told the board once that I felt the same way I did in a knife fight with a bully at school when I was a kid. It was that level. It was no holds barred and no respect. That was the impression I had.

Lage: Did Nick Clinch and Gary Torre take the same tack?

Snyder: No, they were quieter. I think Gary was just a feist dog yapping at the heels of Will. Whatever Will said, Gary was capable of echoing. I don't think Gary understood what was going on. Will was the spokesman; he did the talking. Clinch said very little.

The Management Committee: An Unsuccessful Mechanism for Conflict Resolution

Lage: So how did the conflict between the foundation and the club get resolved?

Snyder: It was resolved by Denny Wilcher having the idea of creating a management committee to interpose in between the club and the foundation. The management committee was to be appointed, some members by the foundation and some by us. The management committee was to make fund-raising plans and to oversee the operations. In a sense, they would stand between the club and the foundation. One of the problems was there was no mechanism for conflict resolution, no mechanism to resolve the dispute. During the negotiations, if we took one position, and they took the other, there was no tie breaker. One of the functions perceived for the management committee was that it would be the tie breaker. Everybody, being thoroughly tired of these negotiations which were absolutely unproductive--the problems were still as bad if not worse--seized this compromise, in effect, as the way out of the problem. Both sides accepted it. We've had the committee, but the committee has not worked. The management committee has been fairly--I guess to be fair about it--close to a failure. It's made no fund-raising plan for the foundation. The foundation has wallowed along. Its fund-raising efforts have not improved.

Staff and Trustee Changes: A Lessening of Tensions

Snyder: There have been some good changes in the foundation. The foundation has added a number of better people to its board of trustees.

Lage: Will Siri is no longer on the board. Was that related to this?

Snyder: His term ended, and he went off. Ed Wayburn's term ended, and he went off.

Lage: So they have set terms?

Snyder: They had terms of seven years apiece. Dick Leonard's term ended. Paul Brooks terminated, although Paul was not like the others.

Lage: When they added people, it appears they've added people from outside the club.

Snyder: They've added outside people. How many outside people and whether that poses future problems remains to be seen. Unless the people have some feel for how the club works, it's difficult for them to know what they're doing or to give instructions to the staff in a meaningful way.

Lage: So you don't see this as being resolved?

Snyder: I don't think it's resolved.

Lage: Joint fund-raising, does that work?

Snyder: No. It may improve. We've put in different people since the "hard-liners" have now gone from the board of trustees. Some of the hard-liners have gone from the Sierra Club board, too. There is much more interchange and discussion of these problems now than ever. It may be that we're on the way toward a resolution. In addition, Nick Clinch, as you know, has resigned as executive director of the foundation. That was part of the problem because Nick, although we all love him, was not constitutionally the right person for the job.

Lage: Was he not aggressive enough as a fund raiser?

Snyder: Well, he spent all of his time on record keeping and meticulous details and not on fund raising. I'm not sure whether he was a good fund raiser or not. I've heard some people say he was, and some say he wasn't. He didn't spend enough time in the actual process of fund raising. He spent all his time on the meticulous details of the records which you didn't need to have or which could have been done in a month instead of three years.*

*In 1981 the Foundation-Club relationship was redefined, with the Foundation Trustees retaining fiduciary responsibility for dispersal of funds, but with fund-raising efforts of the club and the foundation joined and placed under the direction of Sierra Club staff.

VIII. THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION AND THE LOCAL CHAPTERS

Paranoia in Some Local Chapters

Lage: Should we expand a little bit on the relationship with chapters. You mentioned that chapters sometimes are paranoid about the board.

Snyder: Certain chapters--and maybe it's not the chapters, it's the chapter people--felt that they were not consulted enough. I got the impression, and still I have the impression, that lots of chapter people don't trust the board. They think that they have to have a part of every decision, and not only do they have to have a part in making every decision, but that their position on the decision has to be the one that's adopted. Otherwise, they've been left out. They insist on getting all of the paperwork and being involved in details of decision. That is just not feasible, and they are unsatisfied or refuse to accept the fact that we elect a board of directors by a fairly democratic mechanism, and the directors are their representatives. They don't recognize that.

Lage: Are you talking about the council, or is this not even within the council?

Snyder: No, I'm talking about chapter people.

Lage: Like chapter chairs?

Snyder: Yes.

Lage: Do they want to be more involved in the decision making than they are?

Snyder: Yes, they want to be involved. They want to be consulted on everything. I can't say that this is true of all of the chapters. This is true of some chapters. They just distrust the board members.

Lage: Could you give examples? Could you mention chapters or mention issues? What type of situations would this come up in?

Snyder: It came up regularly with issues about wilderness and about wilderness campaigning in Washington. Certain chapters and certain chapter people or certain members always felt that they were left out. It was an obligation on the part of someone to consult them in advance.

Lage: Would this be about matters that affected their area?

Snyder: Well, they were always general matters. They affected their areas not with reference to some specific wilderness place which should be designated, but affected their areas insofar as it was part of a whole number of wilderness areas that would be affected by some decision. The problem was, and has been, that you can't tell everything to everybody if you are going to make a decision. You have to have a mechanism to consult with representative leaders, and then you have to act.

Lage: So this policy that we discussed earlier of sending everything down through the chapters, and then coming back up to the board wasn't satisfying.

Snyder: It wasn't satisfying. Although we would be making decisions on positions for lobbying, decisions which would be consistent with club policy or carrying out existing club policy, because certain people didn't know about it or weren't fully informed, they would raise Cain.

Local Involvement in National Policy Decisions: An Unresolved Problem

Lage: The unhappy chapter members must have been people that were longtime activists.

Snyder: Well, they were. Everybody that has raised Cain has been an activist. There is a structural problem in how many people you have to talk to before you can go ahead and do something. That's why in a democratic way of doing things you have representatives to act on your behalf. I think it was a basic refusal to accept that we had representatives acting for people that caused the problem.

We attempted to address it--I attempted to address it--in a way, by appointing campaign steering committees in a number of areas. The committees would try to oversee particular legislative campaigns in Washington. They worked awkwardly.

Lage: Would these be made up of people from chapters?

Snyder: They would be made up of volunteer representatives trying to get the leaders on their issue in whatever geographic area the issue would affect. For example, one of the first ones we appointed was a RARE II [Roadless Area Review and Evaluation] campaign steering committee to oversee the RARE II process. It was an attempt to satisfy some of these complaints.

Snyder: It never worked perfectly. I had one concept of how it should work because I had set up networks of people before in my early experience in wilderness campaigns and knew they worked if they were done right. I think these people either had not had that kind of experience, or they had a different concept. It has been much rougher. It could work very well. Ideally a campaign steering committee would work in a way that would recognize that the staff people working on the issue can't telephone everybody. They need to be able to telephone one person in the volunteer structure and say, "This is going on, what shall we do?" That volunteer needs to have a network of people that he or she can call or write depending on the time and say, "The issue is coming up and is going to be this, and what shall we say?" The volunteer gets those opinions back, and then the volunteer can call the staff person and say, "The volunteer segments thinks so-and-so."

The volunteer people could originate stuff and send it up. You have to have sort of a cellular network where anytime anybody in the network generates something that he or she thinks the others should know about, it gets sent to the operator of the network. Then the operator makes the decision as to whether it should be recirculated or whether it's unimportant. You have an information exchange which can go on all of the time, and you have your chief staff person in that area in the information exchange system, the material is always flowing in every direction.

I have worked that, and I know that works. People like to know what's going on, and you have to, in a sense, keep people informed. All you have to do is recognize that at some point you have to stop. You can't keep everybody in the whole world informed. You have to make a list, and everybody has to agree that these people will be our spokesmen and representatives. There are some people out there, volunteers, who think that they have to be in every decision-making network. You just can't do it.

Lage: It's what makes the organization so interesting!

Snyder: Yes.

The Role of the Sierra Club Council

Lage: What about the council? There is a lot of talk about the role of the council. Don't tell me what it is supposed to be, but how well do you think it works?

Snyder: I was perceived as the great enemy of the council all of the time I was on the board. My opinion of the council was extremely low. I thought it was totally ineffective in that it did no work, and it accomplished nothing. I'm still of that opinion. I see them working now. I see

Snyder: very little work product from the council. Maybe I've got the wrong idea. Maybe they shouldn't be putting out a work product. Maybe it's a mistake on their part in reacting to the criticism to be straining so hard to produce something. If there is anything valuable out of the council, it's not doing something or making decisions. It's simply the getting together of people from every chapter and getting them to the meetings to see the staff and the directors and to exchange ideas and rub elbows with the higher-ups and with each other. That's a valuable purpose. Whether, if you were going to start from scratch, you would create a council with that purpose, I don't know. Of all the things that they're doing, in my judgment, that's the only valuable thing that comes out of having a council. I think that's an effect that was never contemplated.

Lage: Is that your criticism?

Snyder: No, if the purpose of it is for club volunteers to get together, to observe the board, to meet each other, to exchange ideas, then the expense is justified. If the purpose of it is for them to come to San Francisco and have their meetings like they do now and debate with fifty people some minuscule point of administration, then the money is wasted.

Lage: They are supposed to attend to internal matters?

Snyder: Not even that. They are supposed to recommend to the board things about internal matters. But their recommendations are few and far between and so lacking in weight and merit that you can't justify having the council for doing those things.

Lage: Are there different opinions? Some of the directors, it seems, come up through the council and some come up through the issue committees. Of course, you came up through the issue committees.

Snyder: I came up through the issue committees. I sat at council meetings and watched them, and they were a complete and total waste of time.

Lage: I guess Kent Gill is a big supporter of the council, isn't he?

Snyder: Yes.

Lage: Do you see a difference in opinion about the council on the board?

Snyder: There is a difference. There are some board members who think the council is indispensable, like Marty Fluharty and Denny Shaffer. They both came up through the council.

Lage: Is your opinion very widely shared?

Snyder: I don't know. I think the opinions are probably pretty evenly divided.

Lage: I notice that when budget decisions come up, there is always someone who suggests cancelling a council meeting, and others who are appalled at that.

Snyder: In this year's budget, the council wanted to expand the number of meetings to four, and it was cut back and cut back until they ended up with two, which is the number they've been having. The council is one of those political things that directors are afraid to vote to cut even though secretly they concede that its work product is zilch.

It does serve the function of getting members together. Now, that's a valuable purpose.

Lage: It doesn't train leadership or bring leadership to the surface?

Snyder: Maybe, but it's backward. It's not deliberately done. To the extent that the council delegates are the chapter chairmen, then it does develop leaders. If I were reorganizing it, I would decree that the chapter chairmen should be the council delegates because that's the person, in my judgment, who can most benefit by coming out to San Francisco. I would say the council delegates are probably half chapter chairmen. In the other cases, most of the time where the council delegate is not the chapter chairman, it's somebody in the chapter who is willing to come out to San Francisco. The delegate takes it on as a chore, and those persons are never going to become leaders. They are never going to get into the leadership structure. To the extent that it does serve as a way of developing leaders, it's again an effect that is not done deliberately. It's an accidental side effect.

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IX. THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE ALASKA WILDERNESS

[Interview 3: November 15, 1980]##

The Lobbying Strategy

Lage: Let's talk about conservation and turn away now from the internal affairs of the club. What areas were you most involved in as president, what conservation campaigns?

Snyder: The most important was in the Alaska campaign. I did a substantial amount of lobbying on Alaska in May of '78. Again in May of '79, I spent a week to ten days in Washington lobbying when the Alaska bill was in the House. I was lobbying on the siege that we had to try to get the votes up.

Lage: When you say lobbying, do you want to describe a little more in detail?

Snyder: Yes, that's probably interesting because it was a major campaign, the major campaign of the time for the club. What the staff and the Alaska coalition had done in the week or so before the vote on the bill in the House was to have all of the presidents of the national organizations come to town. It was the last show of force, or showing of the flag, to let the congressmen know that all of the organizations in the coalition were serious, and they were serious enough to bring the top officers to do the lobbying. We would meet each morning at the Sierra Club office in Washington. The staff would know or have ideas on the positions of the various congressmen. They would have a number of congressmen who were either uncommitted or leaning away from our side. Obviously, there was no need to lobby those who were already committed to us, and the lobbying of those who were leaning our way was being very carefully done. The staff would read out the list of the fifty or sixty congressmen that needed to be contacted that day. All the presidents or high officers of the various organizations would volunteer to take persons off the list if they knew them, or had some contact, or the organization had some contact with them. That would get a good number of them assigned. The remainder would then be assigned to us by the staff people based on where we were from, what our interests were.

Snyder: I drew a lot of congressmen in the Southeast and Southwest because the staff thought the southern congressmen would respond to me as a person from their part of the country. With our assignments in hand, the next thing the staff would do would be to give us our materials. Every night the office would generate new hand-out materials to take around on the lobbying round. The material would be based on information learned the day before in the lobbying rounds. The material had the answers to the questions that were being raised, so that overnight we would do the research and have new material to try to answer and address the issues as they developed.

The staff would arm us with that and send us off. The House office buildings are within walking distance of the club office in Washington, so away we'd go. In every case, I had enough assignments that it would take virtually all of the day. Seven or eight or ten visits seems like few enough, but when you have to go from office to office, and you have to wait, and you have to find out who the person is to see, the time just erodes.

Lage: Do you see the congressman himself or herself?

Snyder: Ordinarily, you don't get in to see the congressman himself. On both of those occasions [May of 1978 and May of 1979] there were active things going on on the House floor on other bills. The congressmen were either on the floor and engaged in the debates or in other matters, in committee meetings, or engaged in whatever business was going on. I saw one or two congressmen personally, but as a rule I would see the staff person who was advising the congressman on Alaska. Well, that was almost as good. We would sit and talk and, of course, give him out the new material we had. We would also try to find out what the position of the congressman was. We found out how he was thinking and found out what questions he was asking his staff to research for him, so that we could turn that in and make something new for the next day.

Well, that was all very successful. The staff people and the congressmen we talked to were very up to date on the Alaska issue, primarily because of the first round of hand-out material that the club and the Alaska coalition had generated. We had put together notebooks which had been handed out. The congressmen had gone through them, and everybody had the highest respect for the material we had given. They had digested it, and they would point over in the corner to stacks of material and say, "Look at all of this stuff. There is no way in the world to read it all"--which is probably true.

Lage: What about material from the other side?

Snyder: They had stacks of material from every side--wheelbarrows full. There was no doubt that there was a lot of paper, but the thing that was impressive was that they relied on the Sierra Club and Alaska coalition material more than anything else. I think the reason they relied on it was because we were fair in it. In the material that we handed out,

Snyder: we had analyzed the issues. On charts or on sheets of paper, we would set out the issue and then in columns beside it, we would give our position and the position of industry or whoever was opposing us. We would analyze the opposing position or briefly state it. That was fairly done without an attempt to state the other side in a biased way or in a way that was not trustworthy or honorable. Well, in effect, we had done their reading for them, and they would take our analysis as their starting point.

Of course, the fact that they were then relying on the way we had set forth the arguments meant that our material had more credibility than anybody else's material.

Lage: Did the club's material, then, try to be persuasive?

Snyder: Oh, yes, it was just in one section of the material that we tried to set forth the issues and give everybody's position. In other parts of the material we argued as strongly as we knew how why our position was the correct or better one. We had done the analysis of the issues for them in a way that made the issues clear and focussed everything. Our material was the basis on which, in most cases, they started their analysis. That was very helpful. It also meant that this new material that we handed out daily got a better reading than other material because it fit into the material they already had from us.

Sometimes the congressmen's staff people would tell us what they knew, and sometimes they'd hedge. We met some who were sympathetic and the congressman wasn't and some who were not sympathetic and the congressman was. It's interesting to see how the opinions of the staff differ from the congressmen and how the staff person is trying to persuade the congressman based on the staff person's personal opinions. That would happen all the time.

Lage: Is that one of the ways that the Sierra Club lobbyists work, by trying to persuade the staff?

Snyder: Virtually in every case you have to because the congressman himself is too busy to be seen. In all major legislation the congressman will have a staff person who is assigned to study and analyze all of the material that comes in from all of the various interest groups. The staff person will either lay out the options to the congressman or give him the options plus a recommendation. The recommendation, of course, will be based on their analysis of the issue itself as a logical or philosophical proposition plus the opinion they are hearing from the constituents.

I can tell you that we learned the effectiveness of constituent letters. In nearly every case the staff people would tell us how the mail was running on Alaska. They would tell us who in their home district in the Sierra Club was writing them. They knew how many letters they were getting, and they knew who was producing the letters. We get

Snyder: so many requests to write letters in all the material the Sierra Club sends out, sometimes we think that it does no good. I can tell you in the case of Alaska it did an enormous amount of good. They had them. They had them tallied up. They knew exactly where their constituents stood and that was because our members were sending letters when we asked them.

Lage: Yes, especially the representatives, I would think, who are undecided. If they feel strongly one way or the other, I wonder how much the letters affected them?

Snyder: Well, they all have an eye over their shoulder toward the next election. Even if they were fully decided one way or the other, I think they would tend to be hesitant if the flow of letters were strongly against that personal opinion. They'd start either thinking of ways to duck the vote or to vote for some amendment but not all of them and try to satisfy everybody. Compromise is one of the first words on their lips, and they were looking for ways to be able to satisfy all of their constituents.

Lage: The Sierra Club isn't too big on compromise!

Snyder: Well, we're not big on compromise but in Washington and in any legislative arena, compromise is the name of the game. If you're practical, you recognize that every piece of legislation is a kind of a compromise between conflicting interests. The legislature always will come down in some compromised point, although we didn't go around promoting compromise. You can't do that. You compromise yourself out of everything. We would stick to our position, stick to our guns, yet you could see how the congressmen were responding to pressure from two sides or from several sides and would be seeking a middle ground. The congressmen wanted to say that he had saved something for everybody, or he had struck a balance that didn't harm everybody too badly. That's what happens in the legislative process.

Lage: Was there one main concern that you picked up?

Snyder: No, I can't remember any particular concern. It seems like the concerns expressed in every place were varying. I would say that there were two or three major concerns because they were the concerns of the issue everywhere. Those were the ones on oil and gas explorations and on mining. Those were the resource exploitation issues. There were also issues in southeast Alaska which were mostly lumbering issues. These issues had to do with particular places like Admiralty Island which we wanted to see entirely put into a wilderness except for the native villages. We wanted the island left alone and not have any lumbering take place on it.

Secondarily to those were road issues. The exploiters and developers were hammering for road corridors, and we were strongly opposed to road corridors because anytime you make a road, the exploiters and exploitation follow them.

Snyder: We'd take the answers we got from the congressmen or the questions that the congressmen's staff was having to answer for the congressmen that day and we would go back to the office that evening and be de-briefed. There was one staff person there, and we would tell him what the questions were we had been asked, and we would also tell him what we had learned--if we had learned anything about the voting position of the congressman, or whether he was flatly against us or whether he was leaning and in which way he was leaning. We would tell whatever we could find out, all the straws in the wind. Then we kept a daily running total of our best perception as to where all the congressmen stood. Every night we updated that based on the information gained in the day's lobbying.

Lage: How many days did this go on?

Snyder: Each time, I stayed there a week.

Lage: Going back to the same people?

Snyder: No, every day we'd get a new assignment. I never went the same place twice. The first time in '78 I stayed up there a week. In '79 we were at the board meeting in May and got calls from Washington. They said, "The vote is coming up next week. You've got to come now." Mike and I jumped on the airplane a day after the board meeting and went to Washington and stayed there two or three days, and the vote got put off. We lobbied two or three days, and then we came back. Both of us came back to San Francisco. I worked here another two or three days and went home. I can remember I was flying the "red eye special." I was tired. But I got home, whatever day it was, at 6:30 in the morning and went and dumped out my suitcase and reloaded it and got on the train that night and went to Washington. I stayed a week, and the vote did come up at the end of that week.

After I got out of being president in June of this year, I went and stayed a week and did the same thing on the Senate side. We had a series of appointments set up as I was the immediate past president and was the highest muckety-muck they could get their hands on, and I liked to do it. Up I went and worked the Senate for a week. The Senate is a lot different. It's different because there are fewer senators. Instead of going around individually to the senators, the staff and the coalition had assembled teams of people. We went in teams of four, five, or six people to each senator. The staff and coalition had also organized that week well in advance and had appointments. The others broke them for every reason under the sun. Somebody had a death, and they had to go to a funeral; and the committee meetings, and this, that, and the other. In approximately half of the visits, we actually saw the senator.

Lage: Were these again senators who were undecided?

Snyder: Yes, I got all of the bad guys!

Lage: All of the southerners again?

Snyder: No, I didn't get all of the southerners. They didn't do it that way. I don't know what their rationale was in assigning the senators, but we went around in teams and the teams were assembled without respect to geographical location. I think I saw more western and northern senators than southern although I was on the team that went to see Senator [Herman E.] Talmadge [Democrat from Georgia]. He was out of town. We missed him. We tried for two days to get to see him, and we couldn't. We weren't sure whether he was dodging us or whether he had a real legitimate excuse.

But that was different because we did see the other senators, and in each case we had long appointments. They sat very patiently and listened to our arguments. We'd go around the room, and everybody on the delegation would make a pitch based on what we thought was of interest or concern to that senator. Some of the senators sat and listened, but most of them engaged in a give and take and exchange of views with us.

Lage: Did you have any different impressions of these northern and western senators than you had formed of senators from the South? Were their concerns similar, and how about their respect for the position of the environmentalists?

Snyder: Their respect for our position universally was good, and they gave us their time and attention. Even if we knew it was essentially hopeless to try to talk to them, they still did not throw us out. They still were willing to listen to every argument and were very courteous and tolerant of what we were saying. I think our influence is very great. That's why we got that kind of reception. Who knows how much influence we had on their positions. There is no way of knowing. Even one that's against you, you don't know how much that visit moved him to be a little softer on something. In some cases, I'm reasonably sure our visits did have an effect, based on previous discussions with staff or with the senators. We knew their positions on some of the amendments. In several cases after the visits, we got pledges or commitments or at least expressions of intent to vote on amendments differently than we had had them down on our record for. We could see, based on our first impression, that the visits had made differences.

Lage: Does it make a difference to them that these are volunteer members of the organization rather than paid staff? Did that seem to sink in?

Snyder: I don't think so for this reason. Most of the people on these teams were staff people because the other organizations in the coalition would have their executive directors or presidents there who were paid people--Russ Peterson from Audubon; Tom Kimball from the Wildlife Federation; Bill Turnage, who is the executive director of the Wilderness Society; John Adams of the NRDC [National Resources Defense Council]--people like that who were on these teams were all the paid top staff. The Sierra Club is the only organization in the country where the volunteers do the bulk of the work.

Lage: Would the Wilderness Society send out somebody from their board?

Snyder: The first time I was there, their president, who is from Idaho I believe, was there. But normally they would send their staff people from their Washington office and not pull in their unpaid [volunteers]. The Wilderness Society has a board of directors who are essentially volunteers, but it's not a volunteer activist organization. The members, as such, have no voice in the conduct of the affairs of the organization. The membership supports the staff, and the staff does the work.

The Sierra Club is the only organization where the members pile in and do a big share of the actual lobbying.

Lage: Does that seem to impress the legislature or are they not aware of it?

Snyder: They are aware of it, but I don't think they appreciate it as much as we do. Whether they tie the two together or not I don't know. They know that of all the organizations, the Sierra Club is the one who is on call, as it were, to produce an avalanche of letters and telegrams. They have to know that there is something different about us that enables us to do that!

The Alaska Campaign: The Central Role of Ed Wayburn

Lage: Were you in at all on policymaking for Alaska? Were you on the Alaska Task Force?

Snyder: No, I was not on the Alaska Task Force. I was in on much of the policy-making as Alaska resolutions came before the board. Really, the Alaska issue and the resolve of the club to do its best to protect Alaska was something that was going on long before I got on the board. It goes back at least to 1974 to the enactment of the Native Claims Settlement Act with the D-2 clause in it. It goes back before that, too, and the club for the past ten or fifteen years has been a leader in demanding protection for Alaska land. I can't remember any specific vote. It seems like that's been our policy. We didn't have to make a policy to be for Alaska. We would do fine tuning and talk about policy on some features of things, but not on the broad overall agreement to go after it.

Lage: What is Ed Wayburn's role in the Alaska issue? Does he have a strong leadership role in that?

Snyder: Ed was chairman of the Alaska Task Force and always has been. His role was that of the chief spokesman for the club on Alaska and the leader and organizer of the conservation movement to protect Alaska. His role was the top role in the Alaska campaign in the club and, I'd say, in the nation. Of all the people who did anything on Alaska, Ed Wayburn should get the major part of the credit. He not only saw that Alaska

Snyder: needed protection, but he set out to organize the campaign and to organize the issues. The task force under him--basically it was as much a one-man show as any--was Ed Wayburn. The credit he deserves is so great that it's hard to describe it.

Lage: I'm still a little unclear how the staff and Ed work together in the Alaska Task Force or in organizing this campaign. Does he lead that whole effort?

Snyder: It's a cooperative thing. We had staff in Alaska, mainly Jack Hession, the Alaska representative. Then on the staff in Washington we had at all times, one or two persons whose primary responsibility was Alaska lobbying. We had a full-time employee in the office in San Francisco most of the time who was assigned to Alaska. The board in its priority-setting sessions every year had always made Alaska a first or second of the top priorities--in fact, I think probably first every time I can remember. At any rate, at the top. Mike and the top staff were devoting a substantial share of their lobbying and conservation time to it. They worked together, and the staff people and Ed were on the telephone and in communication with each other almost daily during all these years.

I don't think he gave orders to the staff in the sense that they worked for him, but it was cooperative. They worked for Mike, but they didn't go through Mike. The phone calls went back and forth between Ed and the staff, and when decisions on important issues had to be made, Mike was involved. The directors were involved when there were turns or changes in policy that needed to be discussed.

Club Commitment to the Alaska Issue

Lage: Is there ever a time when segments of the club resent the amount of the resources the club has put into the Alaska campaign over the years? The amount is staggering.

Snyder: No, I don't think so, and that's because we decided as a club, in a democratic manner, that that was the top priority of the club. I think the membership, speaking through its representatives, really expressed the opinion that that was the most important thing we could be doing. I never heard any disgruntlement about that. Oh, we grumbled a few times at Ed because he was a past master of wheedling extra money out of the board for the Alaska campaign, and it came at the expense of other parts of the program which some people thought were important. Really, if you boil it all down, that was really minor, and nobody begrudged money for the Alaska campaign. In terms of things the club has done, it was the best financed campaign we've ever done simply because of our realization that the campaign was the most important, the most significant thing that was going to happen

Snyder: for many years. We put all the money we could lay our hands on into the campaign. We were able to operate, primarily in Washington, in a fairly unconstrained way from a financial point of view.

Lage: It made a lot of difference?

Snyder: It made an enormous difference. I can remember Brock and some of the other staff people telling me how much of a difference it was and how much easier it was for them to lobby in a campaign where the funding was at an adequate level. It contrasted with the usual funds for things that they had to do where there was never enough money.

Lage: Money makes a difference!

Snyder: It does make a difference. It makes an enormous difference.

Alaska's Future

Lage: Are you concerned now about what is going to happen with Alaska?

Snyder: Well, of course, we all were concerned. We got a bill passed [Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980], but it's not what we would like.

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Snyder: It's much easier to defend a bill that has been passed and protect it from being tampered with and weakened than it is to protect something where there is no bill, where you are trying to get a bill passed. Part of it is the psychological problem--it's easier to stop something in the legislature than to start something. It's easier to convince people to be against something than it is to convince people to be for something. I don't know why that is, but it is. Once a bill is passed, people like to put that behind them, and so it is easier to stave off attacks.

In the case of Alaska, the bill is weaker than we want. There are some places we want saved, and we would like to strengthen the bill by bits and pieces over the years. But at the same time, the congressman from Alaska, Mr. [Don E.] Young, has said that he's going to weaken it over the years.

Lage: We are not through with this battle yet.

Snyder: We're not through; we'll never be through I don't think. There will be a constant war over it. I think the basic structure of what is passed is something that we can defend, and I don't think Mr. Young can cut it down. I think we have a fair chance of adding bits and pieces, not all at once, but slowly and gradually over the years.

X. THE EASTERN WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN

Early Involvement: The Slickrock Creek Road Controversy

Lage: Would you have some comments about efforts you've made for the eastern wilderness? That was your other major conservation interest.

Snyder: I did a lot of lobbying on the eastern wilderness, but that took place before I was president. I'm not sure how exactly I got involved in the eastern wilderness thing except a person in Asheville, North Carolina, named Gus Morris, called me up to come to Asheville. He wanted me to go with him and a group he was getting together to present a petition to the Forest Service's regional supervisor in Asheville--not regional supervisor but forest supervisor for the national forests in North Carolina. I agreed to go.

Lage: When was this? Do you remember?

Snyder: This would have been in the early seventies. Gus Morris was a Trout Unlimited person. There was a creek in western North Carolina called Slickrock Creek, which I didn't know a thing about and had never seen or heard of until Gus called me up. The Forest Service was building a road into this valley which had no roads in it. Slickrock Creek was in the valley. Gus had circulated a petition, and it had been out on the counter in all of the drug stores in western North Carolina. He had gotten some seven hundred signatures asking the Forest Service to stop building this road.

We went to give it to the forest supervisor. I guess Gus had half a dozen people gathered together, and the forest supervisor did not like petitions. Gus was there holding it out to him, and the forest supervisor put his hands in his pockets. I thought to myself, "This is going to be a real show. He's going to have to throw it on the floor at his feet!" [laughter] Finally the fellow did take it, all the time telling us that petitions didn't mean anything to him. On that same visit in the Forest Service office we met with the deputy supervisor. He talked to us, and one of the things he said was that the Forest Service had no plans then to extend the road into the valley or do anymore work on it. As a result

Snyder: of the conversations he promised that, if there was anymore road work contemplated, he would let us know so that we would have fair warning and could go to court or do whatever we wanted to do. That seemed to be a decent thing to do.

In some months we got a letter from him that said there was to be a hearing in Robbinsville, North Carolina, about a road. I thought it was about the road into the valley, so I went to the hearing. It turned out it was a different road. It was a forest highway, a scenic highway. They called it scenic, but it was really a timber road that was going to go along the top of the ridge of this valley that still had no road into it. The ridge-top road would be between the valley of Slickrock Creek and another valley which, on inspection, had no road in it. I'm outspoken. I finally made a speech at this hearing. I said, "The road can't go there. It's got to go around on one side or the other."

It was a small hearing. Nobody knew much about it, so what I said didn't make a bunch of controversy. I talked to the highway engineer who was working on it, and he said, "The route you propose around it is the route we originally studied. Do you want to see it?" I said, "Yes." He went and got the plans. We were using the courtroom in this little town in extreme western North Carolina. We rolled the plans out down the aisle of the courtroom from one end to the other and looked at them. As a result of that, I said, "That road has got to be stopped." I think as much from being contrary as anything else!

Lage: Do you mean the ridge-top road?

Snyder: The ridge-top road, I thought at that time in my ignorance, was somehow connected to or a part of the road into the valley of Slickrock Creek that was involved in the petition. That was because I just didn't understand what was going on. Anyhow, we started fighting the ridge-top road.

Lage: Had you been to this area?

Snyder: I had never been there, never there! [I] knew nothing about it. The chapter outing chairman or I had organized an outing, and they had gone there, but they hadn't been able to find the place. I think they got to the edge of it, and they sent a report. The report was too garbled. Maybe it was as much garbled because of my ignorance of the fact that there were two roads, and I was trying to think in terms of one road. At any rate, we decided we'd fight the ridge-top road. I had met these people as a result of the petition presentation, so I knew a small cadre of people. We decided to get together all of the conservationists we knew of in Asheville. Through my limited contacts and primarily through the contacts of these other people, we got together about forty or fifty people and met in the chapel of the funeral home that Gus Morris owned. We decided that we would fight it until the death and that it had to be a Wilderness with a capital W because that was the only way to block the road. There was no way of doing anything else but mounting instantly a wilderness campaign. They elected or appointed me chairman of the effort and, in my naiveté, I took it on. [chuckles]

Combining Forces with Other Wilderness Activists

Snyder: As a result of my campaign against the road at Slickrock Creek, I started making contact with the people in Washington in the wilderness movement. At about the same time, I became the Sierra Club's regional vice-president for the Appalachian region and started meeting other people in the conservation part of the Sierra Club in the southeastern states. Although I was leading the campaign for a particular place to be a wilderness, there were other wilderness fights going on all up and down the east coast. Gradually, people got to know each other and realized that there were other places and other people, and we finally said, "We've all got to get together. We'll stop each one doing his individual thing, and we'll combine our efforts."

We combined our efforts and everybody got to know each other, and we started a campaign for an eastern wilderness bill. Since I was involved in it by virtue of just being bold, I ended up being the coordinator for the southern half of it. That was something I did just based on what seemed to be the way to do things rather than any experience or education. I organized a network of people, and we had an information exchange and everytime anybody ever found out anything they thought was important, they'd send it to me. If I thought it was important enough, I'd copy it and send it around to everybody else. When I learned things that were important, I'd send them around so that everybody was kept up to date.

We campaigned like that for several years until we finally got an eastern wilderness bill passed in '74 [Eastern Wilderness Areas Act], I believe.

Wilderness vs. Wild Area: Conflicts with the Forest Service

Lage: Was the eastern wilderness bill something that had support from the Sierra Club monetarily?

Snyder: It had monetary and staff support from the Sierra Club, and we had an enormous fight inside the club over it. At the time we started agitating for eastern wilderness, all of these people from New England to Texas started demanding little bits and pieces of wilderness that they had found. The Forest Service began to take the position that there was no wilderness in the East, that the definition of wilderness ipso facto precluded any designation. That came to be called the purity argument. It's position was that wilderness had to be pure and pristine and never have been touched by man. As a matter of fact, most of the eastern forest had been logged or had ox cart roads or had log cabins or some marks of man. These marks were mostly healed over because the forests hadn't been used for anything. Trees had been quietly growing for fifty or more years.

Snyder: Anyhow, the Forest Service took the position that there was no wilderness in the East, by definition, and as an alternative they started proposing other kinds of systems for areas that were not wilderness. The systems had many of the protections that the wilderness areas had. They went through a number of permutations of names, but gradually they got to be called the wild areas system. They proposed that a number of areas in the East be named "wild areas."

On analysis, we got scared to death of it. I was coming to San Francisco then as regional vice-president to the board meetings. The western people were afraid of the wild areas because they said, "If you do it in the East, then the next thing you know it will turn into a nationwide system. Instead of getting wilderness--all of the areas that we want as wilderness--the legislative process being one of compromise, they'll always put them in the lower category." I think that was a real justified fear. I think it would still happen today if we had a wild area system. Those of us who were fighting decided we couldn't have that.

At the same time, we had a staff person in the Washington office named Peter Borrelli who wanted the wild area system. We had some other people who were persuaded by him that that was the best we could do. They thought that we ought to give up and take what we could get. The hard-liners, of which I was one of the ringleaders, took the position that it was wilderness, and if we'd stick to our guns we could get it.

Finally, the board of directors had to resolve the conflict. I can remember the board meeting at which we had that argument. I was thumping the table.

Lage: Were you a board member then?

Snyder: No, I was a regional vice-president then. I was not a board member, and I was raising Cain about the wilderness system. Some of the other people were resisting and saying that my position was unreasonable, and we had better take what we could get, or we'd get nothing. There were side meetings and the board argued for a while and then appointed a words committee to go and see if they could refine the language. We went around and around, but finally the board voted for the position that I was promoting and settled that argument.

Then we went back with a unified position and demanded wilderness and nothing less. The Forest Service had had its spokesman, a congressman, introduce in Congress a wild areas bill designating a list of ten or fifteen areas as wild areas over the eastern national forest. Our congressmen friends had introduced wilderness bills and, in various parts of the East, congressmen in whose districts these wilderness areas lay had introduced individual bills. Finally, those all got drawn together into an omnibus wilderness bill with fifteen or seventeen areas.

Snyder: There were committee hearings to which we all went and demanded wilderness and not the wild areas bill. The House hearings and Senate hearings I went to, and we'd turn out the troops for them. The Senate held some hearings around the country. I know I went to a Senate hearing in Roanoke, Virginia, which Senator [Floyd] Haskell presided over. I went to another hearing somewhere--maybe it was in Washington--which Senator [Henry] Bellmon was presiding over from Oklahoma.

At any rate, we prevailed, and Congress eventually passed an eastern wilderness bill and designated the areas as wilderness, as part of the wilderness system. We established the principle that areas that had once been used could restore themselves enough to qualify as wilderness. The purity argument of the Forest Service was, in effect, rejected by the Congress.

Lage: Would you say that this purity argument was a sincere argument on their part?

Snyder: I don't think so. I think the Forest Service dislikes wilderness. That's using a mild word which doesn't express the full depth of my feeling. The Forest Service is pervaded by an attitude that goes back to the days of Gifford Pinchot, the first chief forester of the United States. Pinchot's philosophy, which reflected some of the thinking of that day, was that everything had to be used. They used the word conservation in the sense of the wise use of resources. But the word use in the definition was where the emphasis lay. To them leaving something alone was not using it. Use meant the exploitation of it, and that philosophy is still to this day the philosophy of the forestry graduates, the professionals who operate the Forest Service. They cannot imagine or will not imagine that there can be a use which involves leaving things alone. They talk conservation and use the word conservation and conservation to them means making use of things--manipulating--all the time doing something. It doesn't necessarily mean clear-cutting forestry. It can mean forestry by the kind of methods that we say are proper, the selective cutting and all that. But it means some cutting. The most horrible thing that can happen in their view is for a tree to mature and fall down and rot!

Lage: Do you think the Forest Service's objections are more philosophical than a result of the pressures they're under from industry and others?

Snyder: No, I wouldn't say that. They've got this philosophical point of view, and that can be used to rationalize, in part, the pressure they're under from industry. The pressure from industry's side of things is this. All of the forestry schools, with maybe one or two exceptions, are endowed by, subsidized by, and supported by the forest industry. As a result, they teach the industry line so that the products of the forestry schools who, in turn, are the forestry professionals of the Forest Service, all speak the same line. Of course, the forest industry foresters went to the same schools, too. The forestry professionals in the Forest Service and in industry speak to each other and because of the slant of their common education, they really don't realize that

Snyder: there's another side to things and don't take it into account. I think when the industry people tell the Forest Service foresters that they have to manage intensively, they believe it because they both have the same education.

The forest industry wants more and more wood off of the Forest Service because that's the cheapest source of supply. That's strictly the reason for wanting it and for putting pressure on the Forest Service. It is strictly because the Forest Service would maximize industry's profits.

XI. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS: ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS

Public Access to the Forest Service

Lage: The Forest Service has talked a lot about public involvement, particularly in the latter part of the seventies. What has been your experience? Has there been a change over this last decade in their willingness to listen?

Snyder: The Forest Service pays lip service to public participation. There is no question that the number of meetings at which the public attends and hears presentations by the Forest Service and gives its opinions to the Forest Service have dramatically increased in number. However, at the public hearings that I've been to it's almost a universal truth that the people that speak are the environmentalists or the people that have some bone to grind with the Forest Service. I've often wondered why the timber industry people aren't so outspoken at these meetings. They are present in force, but say very little. Finally, I realized that the public hearings are just part of the public participation process, and the record always remains open for written comments. Industry, of course, is supplying all of their information in written form after the hearings in a way that does not subject it to rebuttal or criticism.

The Forest Service, I think, is hypocritical about the way they do their public hearings. They slant them. I've been to hearings that they've deliberately rigged, so the true sentiment of the crowd could not be expressed.

Lage: Do you mean in the way they control the meeting?

Snyder: In the way they control the meeting. Those things are callous ways of doing things, but you can call them on it, and they just puff up and get mad and won't admit it.

Lage: Have you found them to be defensive overall?

Snyder: They are defensive. I can give you example after example. They claim they are responsive but they make it difficult to be responsive. They hold hearings in their most remote localities so that it's difficult for city people to get them. They hold seminars and workshops only during weekdays when citizens who have jobs too can't get off without having to take days of leave or use up vacation time or that sort of thing. They can't really participate. They just finished a seminar on forest management in Knoxville, Tennessee, and it was held at a university. They charged a \$25 registration fee, and the places to stay were on a list of the expensive motels in Knoxville, and it was done on a Thursday and a Friday.

Lage: Was this supposed to be for the public?

Snyder: This was a public seminar, so that the Forest Service could find out the views of the citizens on forest management in the Southeast. But the citizens can't go to that because, first of all, most of them can't afford the extra expense. They can't leave their work on those days and get there. The people who will influence it, the forest industry representatives, will go because the people they send to it will be on salary to attend and will have expense accounts. Of course, the Forest Service people will be there because it's their job to be there, and they'll be on expense accounts. The Forest Service won't work on the weekends because that's their vacation time and weekends are virtually the only time that volunteers can work. They refuse to see that.

Lage: Does that seem to be a deliberate thing or more ignorance on their part?

Snyder: I think it's deliberate because enough people that I know, including myself, have written them and told them that they can't ever expect to receive true citizen opinion unless they design their hearings so that it's convenient for the citizens and not convenient for themselves.

Lage: You don't spend a lot of your time lobbying the Forest Service?

Snyder: It's of no use. They make their minds up first, then hold hearings in order to find confirmation of what they want to do.

Environmentalists and the Social Issues

Lage: Let's shift gears and talk about a different kind of environmental issue. What do you see as the relationship between environmental issues and larger social issues like urban problems?

Snyder: Oh, there is a tremendous connection between the two. Urban people are stuck in lousy housing without automobiles or means of transportation. They live in many, if not most, cases in the inner city where there are few recreation possibilities. They are hemmed in. It's to our advantage

Snyder: to join forces with those people for any number of reasons. First of all, if inner city housing is repaired, fixed up, and made livable, it takes far less wood from the forest than it does to make brand new houses in a subdivision. If inner city housing is fixed up and made livable, it saves enormous petroleum expenditure because you can ride mass transit to work, or you can walk to work instead of riding ten or fifteen or twenty miles to the suburbs. It helps mass transit become a factor because mass transit is only workable where there is an adequate density of population. A suburban sprawl-type city can never support mass transit because the people that would use it are too spread out. It requires a substantial density of population to be economically feasible, and we're interested in saving that energy. We're interested in seeing inner cities revitalized and revamped.

We've got to recognize that the people that live in the inner cities are going to vote some day, if they're not voting now. The young ones are certainly going to grow up to vote and have demands. If they're going to support the views of the environmentalists, we have got to introduce them to the out-of-doors in a way that they will see in it the same values we see in it. We're trying to do that with things like the inner city outings, which I consider the missionary arm of the club. The inner city outings are reaching to people who would never even know that the out-of-doors world was there if we weren't taking them. We've got to expand that.

Lage: It seems that, whereas that is a popular program of the club, it doesn't get a lot of support financially.

Snyder: It doesn't. They're subsidized to a small degree. We have started raising more money for them. For reasons that I have never been able to understand, the foundation has not been able to raise large amounts of money for it. I think it's the kind of program that more money could be raised than they possibly could spend if it was done, not just right, but if it just were done! I think it's a self-selling type of program.

To go back to the cities, the people in the city who were disadvantaged, and even if they're not disadvantaged, if they're hemmed in in the city, have to breathe the same air and drink the same water as those of us who are advantaged. It's to their advantage, and it's to our advantage, to pool our common interests to get clean air and safe water.

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Lage: Could you talk about less clear-cut areas where the club might be against development and run into interests of labor or areas where energy pricing policies might effect poor people. Do you think the club is sensitive to those elements?

Snyder: Yes. Well, energy pricing policy is something that we've argued about on the board of directors. I think we passed a resolution last year basically saying that energy prices should reflect all of the cost factors. Recognizing that that would work against the poor, we put an exception in for people who would be so adversely affected by it that it would really endanger their way of living. We said that there should be a subsidy. Now, that's a fair way of doing things. It internalizes all of the costs, and then it gives a subsidy to those who need it. It calls it a subsidy; it's not a secret subsidy. It's a thought-out, deliberate way to help people who otherwise would not be able to cope with the shortage or with the expense.

Lage: Do you think the leaders of the club are fairly sensitive to poor people who really aren't represented in the club at all?

Snyder: Yes, I think they are. I would say they are. There are several people on the board who always are on the watch for that sort of thing and keep that from being forgotten.

Lage: Who are these?

Snyder: Bill Futrelland, when he was on the board, Lowell Smith. Those two were on the constant alert to see that we did not overlook those factors.

Lage: There is no disagreement about that?

Snyder: I don't think so.

Lage: I remember a controversial issue in the South with the Chattahoochee Chapter newsletter. Was that ERA?

Snyder: No, that was nuclear power. That happened since I left the board.

Lage: Oh, I thought this was more of a social issue.

Snyder: Wait a minute--yes--while I was president we had a tremendous amount of opposition expressed in the form of letters to me and letters to the editor of the Chattahoochee newspaper. The newspaper turned them into a series of charges and counter charges condemning the club for wandering from its traditional role by being in favor of urban redevelopment, being in favor of ERA, and by being in favor of unions. It wasn't unions, it was the way the issue was stated. It was that the club had been in favor of supporting strikers.

Lage: Was there a particular issue?

Snyder: Yes, it was an old, old issue that got dragged up.

Lage: The Shell Oil strike?

Snyder: The Shell Oil strike. We supported the Shell refinery workers, the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union because they were striking over working conditions. The working condition was that some material was being put in the air at the refinery that the workers had to breathe that was hurting them. We supported them and said the refinery has got to clean that up so the workers can breathe a decent, non-dangerous air on the job.

Lage: That was in 1973, so they really were dragging this up from the past.

Snyder: They dragged that up and used it to say that we had strayed from the path.

Lage: But was ERA the issue that got them going?

Snyder: No, I don't think so. It was labor and the urban program and ERA. I can't remember what it was that triggered the beginning of the protest. I think it probably was just that somebody got mad or disgruntled and decided to look around and find all the reasons why, in that person's opinion, we had strayed from our rightful path. I attempted to answer the letter at one point.

Lage: This was a letter to you?

Snyder: Yes, I was set up. The person wrote a letter to me and sent a blind copy of his letter to the newsletter. The newsletter held it until after I had replied so that, in making my reply, I didn't know that they were getting ready to have a series of letters back and forth. I was sand-bagged. Now, I would have said the same thing. I might have said things with different adjectives or might have put more thought into framing it if I had known it was for publication because you naturally would do that. Anyhow, I let the answer go and said in the case of the oil workers that we were for clean air. It didn't mean that we were supporting workers on every wage issue. That wasn't it. We were working with labor where we had interests that were joint interests, and I think that's proper. We have to join forces where we have common interests.

One of the interesting things was they were citing the Wilderness Society as an organization that hadn't strayed from it's rightful path. I went back in the Wilderness Society bulletins and discovered that indeed their board had passed a resolution as strong, if not stronger, than ours supporting the same strikers.

Lage: Actually, I recall when that came up in '73 the Sierra Club wouldn't make their statement as strong as all of these other environmental organizations.

Snyder: That's right.

Lage: It is kind of ironic.

Snyder: The ERA question had gotten before the board because we had a women's outreach subcommittee that Helen Burke was heading. She brought things to the board--not every meeting, but with fair regularity--about it. We endorsed the ERA, and I made a statement at some board meeting, which I thought was right and still do, that as long as I was president, we wouldn't hold any meetings in a non-ERA state. I made that statement because Helen had wanted to pass a resolution of the board as a matter of policy, that the club would hold no meetings in non-ERA states. I saw that that would be controversial. I thought the way to head it off and the way to dampen the strength of it was just for me to say, "You don't need it. That's my policy. You can rely on it." I thought it was the right policy, and it seemed like that was the politic way to handle it. Well, it didn't matter with these guys! [laughter]

Lage: Where is the Chattahoochee Chapter?

Snyder: That's Georgia and Alabama. It was coming from both states. One of the persons who was writing the letters was from Birmingham [Alabama]. The urban program was another issue. There were three things--ERA, the Shell strikers, and the urban program.

Lage: The urban program was supported by Georgia. Isn't Bill Futrell from Georgia?

Snyder: Yes, it was supported, and Bill was the key person in getting the urban part of the club going. Well, people from the Chatohoochee Chapter never recognized that. That had absolutely no influence. They charged that we put on the urban conference in Detroit [City Care April, 1979]. We had the big conference co-sponsored with the Urban League of Detroit. They took that and accused us of spending enormous amounts of the club's wealth on urban issues which were outside the mainstream. To answer that, I gave the same answers, in essence, that I gave you just a few minutes ago about how helping revitalize the inner city does coincide with our issues. I also did an economic analysis and demonstrated that of the club's resources, less than a thousand dollars a year was going into urban issues. It's true. The City Care Conference was self-funded. They raised the money, and the club didn't have to spend any money to organize that conference. The only money the club was spending on urban affairs at the time was the budget for the urban task force. The budget was very small, and they hadn't even spent all of their money.

I tried to point out that the urban program is important. If you measure priorities by where the money goes, the club's priorities are on Alaska, energy, wilderness, and forest issues. It was such a vast disproportion on Alaska and forestry and energy that these others were tokenism in comparison.

Lage: What about on the board itself and the ERA issue? Was that debated? Did people see the connection between environmentalism and ERA?

Snyder: It was debated , but there was no dissent, as I recall. There was a general agreement. I can't remember that there was any controversy.

Lage: Do you think they just thought it was like voting against motherhood, or did they feel it was important somehow to the environmental movement?

Snyder: No, we articulated the reasons. The core of the reasons were that there were many women who were in the environmental movement who were doing all they could, but if there was an equal rights amendment, their ability to work within the movement would be enhanced. We were just helping improve the lot of our own workers by being for the adoption of the amendment. I can remember writing to somebody in one of the chapters setting forth the arguments. That was the main argument. There were a number of other arguments that Helen Burke wrote down for us one time. I had her do it for me so that I could respond in a meaningful way and not omit anything. I wrote somebody and told them that. They wrote me back and cussed me out and said, "If that's the reasons you're for it, you don't know what you're doing!" [laughter]--implying that there were some right reasons somewhere, but I missed them!

The Smoky Mountains Wilderness Campaign

Lage: Are there any other things on conservation campaigning or conservation issues we should discuss?

Snyder: I did some campaigning on energy issues for a couple of days when I would be in Washington, and they needed help. I did a good bit of campaigning trying to get the Smokies wilderness bill moving, and it still hasn't moved. Whenever I was in Washington I would go and visit people at [the Department of] the Interior or on the committees and the subcommittees in the House and Senate just to let them know that the citizens were worried, and we were pushing and doing things.

The Smokies wilderness bill was stalled because of a contract made in 1943 between the people of Swain County, North Carolina, and the Interior Department, the TVA, and the state of North Carolina. Under the terms of the contract, a substantial block of acreage--44,000 acres--was added to the Smokies Park [Great Smoky Mountains National Park] in consideration of the receipt of which the Park Service agreed to rebuild a road that was being flooded by the construction of Fontana Dam on the Little Tennessee River. The road belonged to the county. It was an odd contract. TVA was building the dam, and they condemned the road. In lieu of paying for the road, they bought the land and gave it to the Park Service. The Park Service said to TVA, "If you will buy the land and give it to the park, we'll pay for the road."

Everybody did what they were supposed to do, but the Park Service didn't build the road. The contract had an escape clause in it, as it required the [Department of the]Interior to build the road when Congress

Snyder: appropriated the money. Congress didn't appropriate the money. In the meantime, NEPA [National Environmental Protection Act] came along and other laws which made it obvious that the road could not be built because it would have been built inside the park. The county rightfully considered it had some claim to some compensation for the nonreceipt of the road. That controversy was going on all the time I was president, before I was president, and still is.

I got the people in the county into negotiating with the conservation community, and we made a lot of progress. The contract was still stymieing the passage of the wilderness bill for the Smokies, and I kept up regular contacts every time I was in Washington, to keep interest up and to let people know we had to have the wilderness bill. We put in a good bit of time on it.

Lobbying for the Justice Department

Snyder: Another major thing I lobbied for I did on my own. That was to get an increased appropriation and an increased authorization for man-spaces for the Justice Department's Lands and Natural Resource Division. The club took just a general position. I saw that that was an important need.

Lage: How does that function?

Snyder: The Justice Department's Lands and Natural Resource Division is in charge of all of the acquisitions of federal lands for parks and for the national forests where they are buying land holdings. They're in charge of all of the litigation for EPA. The EPA doesn't have their own legal staff. They were doing all of the toxic substance litigation. They didn't have enough staff people or enough money to do anything except to defend cases that other people brought. It looked like if they could get some money and they could get some personnel authorized, they could go on the offensive and bring their own law suits. Also, having inadequate staff to handle the acquisition cases which were mostly eminent domain, was costing the government an enormous amount of money. When an eminent domain or condemnation proceeding was started, the value at which the land was to be taken is not determined as of the date that the proceeding is started, but is determined as of the date when the court finally makes its decision.

They had a four-year waiting delay time because they didn't have enough people to handle the cases. In buying land for the government, we were buying four years of inflation as a regular thing. That amounted to millions and millions of dollars.

Lage: How did you know about them? Did you have friends in the agency?

Snyder: Yes, the assistant attorney general was a friend of mine, Jim Moorman. Jim and I had talked about needs, and I knew that he needed help in that respect. I set out and attended some meetings with some other people who were like-minded, particularly John Adams from NRDC, Bill Butler at Environmental Defense Fund, Ollie Houck and Peter Kirby at the National Wildlife Federation, and half a dozen other people who saw how that could help the environmental community. We lobbied hard, just a small band of us, never more than ten. I put in about a week of my own time lobbying both in the House and the Senate. I lobbied primarily in the Senate because it was easy in the Senate, and I had the handle on South Carolina. It turned out that Senator [Ernest] Hollings from South Carolina was chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee which had the Justice [Department] under its jurisdiction. I was able to lobby my own home senator for the money that Jim needed.

Senator Thurmond from South Carolina was then the ranking minority member of the Senate Judiciary Committee which had to authorize the extra man-spaces. I worked on Senator Thurmond and got him to agree to support us for the extra man-spaces--or person spaces! I'm sorry. [laughter] I'm forgetting half of the time!

Thurmond did that without any argument with us. He just agreed and was so cooperative and nice and helped. He went to the Senate committee hearings and Judiciary Committee hearings, and he was all for it and supported it strongly. We had also visited Senator Kennedy in a deputation, and he had agreed to support us as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. It went through. We got in seventy-five spaces for personnel and an appropriation of money to pay their salaries and expenses so that the Land Division became, for the first time in its history, a significant division in the Justice Department.

Future Relations with Key Southern Senators

Lage: Are you still going to have Senator Thurmond's ear now that he is the majority leader in that committee?

Snyder: Yes, I think so because I'm from his state. Senators respond more to their constituents. I've known him almost from the time he got into the Senate. It's a personal relationship with him that goes back to when I first got out of law school. Thurmond knew that I was in partnership with Tom Wofford and he'd send me tickets to ball games and things that he didn't want. I was around and had just been in contact with him on a regular basis through the years. Whether he knows that or now, I haven't the faintest idea, but I always get a good reception in his office.

The same thing is developing with Senator Hollings. Senator Hollings is a different kind of senator entirely.

Lage: Is he on any key committees?

Snyder: Senator Hollings is on the Senate Appropriations Committee. He is one of the most powerful senators there is in Washington. His staff is much more pro-environment than Senator Thurmond's staff.

Lage: Have you had to lobby him?

Snyder: Oh, yes. We gave him some money the other day in his re-election campaign. SCCOPE [Sierra Club Committee on Political Education] made a small contribution, and I went to help present it to him. He was very cordial, and we got into an extremely animated conversation. The Coastal Zone Management Act is his contribution personally to the environment. He loves it, and all he could talk about was how he was going to defend it and broaden it and who was trying to take it away from him and what he was doing to block them! [chuckles]

Lage: That's good! Good for South Carolina.

XII. THE SIERRA CLUB AND POLITICS: THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION

Conservationists for Carter

Lage: Let's talk about "external relations." Let's start out talking about the Carter administration and the club's relationship with the administration.

Snyder: The club had very good relations with the Carter administration because club members had been active [during his election campaign in 1976] in Conservationists for Carter. The group was an arm of the Carter campaign which he didn't see fit to reorganize this time! Many of us, including myself, had been very active in Conservationists for Carter.

Lage: How did you make that judgment at that time? Was it his record in Georgia?

Snyder: In my case, it was people I knew. It was sort of a personal connection. I knew a lot of the people in Atlanta who organized and got it started and who were running it. It was all the river running crowd, the canoeists that ran the rivers in north Georgia and in northwest South Carolina. We knew each other through that connection and hung around together.

Lage: Were they Sierra Club people?

Snyder: There were Sierra Club people, Georgia Canoeing Association people, hiking people, people who were then involved in conservation campaigns that I had gotten to know. There were two or three different sources, but most of them were the river rats from that part of the country. The club members who were involved in it joined because, on analyzing the candidates, they thought Carter was better or more likely to be our kind of person. That proved to be true because after Carter was elected, he appointed a lot of people who had close connections with the Sierra Club or with the environmental movement. Some of them came out of the Conservationists for Carter organization. Most of those got lower positions in the administration, but they were still contact people. Others were people who had been active in the environmental movement, people like Jim Moorman; people like Rupert Cutler who was the assistant secretary of agriculture in charge of the Forest Service.

Lage: What had he done before that?

Snyder: Rupert, when I first got to know him, was an employee of the Wilderness Society. He left them and was an agricultural extension professor at the University of Michigan, I believe. He had served on the [Sierra] club's wilderness committee at that time. He actually ran for the board once way back then. I knew him closest from the years he served on the wilderness committee when I was a member of the wilderness committee. He knew us, and we knew him. Everybody in the wilderness movement knew Rupert. We'd call him up and tell him what we thought without worrying about choosing words.

There were other people like that--Barbara Blum, the deputy administrator of EPA, was one of the Atlanta people that came out of Conservationists for Carter. She had connections with many, many people in the club because she had been chairman of the Atlanta group of the club at one time. It was part of the mainstream of the way we thought. Gus Speth, chairman of CEQ [Council on Environmental Quality] was one of our people. There were other people in the administration, the secretaries--Secretary [Bob] Bergland in Agriculture and Cecil Andrus in Interior--who, although they were not part of the environmental movement, proved to be extremely open, extremely receptive to us, and were willing to listen to us and meet with us any time we wanted to almost. It was extraordinary.

An Open Administration

Snyder: President Carter started a practice of meeting with the environmental community's representatives about twice a year. Not on a regular schedule, but about every six months he would indicate that he would be interested in seeing us. I went to one of the first of those meetings as the representative of the Sierra Club and eventually went to several as the club's representative. They were small groups, and we would meet beforehand and use the meetings as a session in which to tell the president our concerns at what was happening to the environment, what he was doing that we perceived he shouldn't do, and things that we thought he should do that would help the movement. He was receptive and listened to us and gave us extra time and obviously was paying attention to us.

In addition to these face-to-face meetings with the president, Carter invited us to send him periodically a written statement of what concerns we had. We had, as part of the statement, a list of the things that we thought he should do to remedy the problems or correct them or whatever was needed. We recommended what we thought he ought to do. We started doing that and every month or two months we would send him a long letter telling him our concerns.

Lage: Do you mean as a club or the group as a whole?

Snyder: The group, the environmental community. We organized sort of an ad hoc collection of people. Brock Evans was the convener of it and the MC.

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Snyder: I didn't do any of the getting together, but the staff people in the various organizations in Washington would get together and put together the letter and send it to Carter, and we all got copies of it.

Lage: How was the follow-up on this? He was a "good listener"-- Was he receptive to what you said and acted on it?

Snyder: Yes, he did. He acted on a lot of it. When we would send the letter, he was supposed to read it and send back a copy marked up with his comments in the margin. I'm not sure how often that happened, but I think he did it. At least I think I have a copy of one that he did that to. He claimed to be a speed-reader and had the time and the ability to do that.

Some of the things we asked him to do he did do, so I think he did see it. The letter went to him through Stu [Stuart E.] Eizenstat. At all of the meetings we had with the president, Stu Eizenstat was present.

Lage: What was his position?

Snyder: He was the domestic affairs advisor [assistant for domestic affairs and policy] for the president, which made him one of the most powerful people. He controlled all of the domestic affairs policy that went to the attention of the president. It went through him. He was a very busy person, but a very able person. At any rate, he was at all of these meetings and invariably stayed after the meeting, and we would talk to him further in more detail.

Lage: So he seemed interested as well?

Snyder: Well, he was open. I don't know about his interest. He was one of the most poker-faced guys in the world and the best at not revealing his real emotions. He said he was interested, and I think you have to take him at face value. He listened to us, and I think that was the important thing. Whether we prevailed or not, we had their respect to the extent that they were interested in obtaining our views and gave us the entrée so that we could get their views. I know when the Alaska campaign was at its height, Stu Eizenstat was talking to our people everyday on the phone, and we were coordinating with him and with our lobbyists, the activity of the administration's lobbyists. You can't have that kind of open cooperation without interest.

Snyder: Both times while I was president of the Sierra Club when we had a meeting in Washington, each time in February, the board met with high administration officials. In February of '79, the board met with Cecil Andrus in his office, and we talked about Alaska issues. We talked about the proposal then pending as to whether the Forest Service should be moved over to the Interior Department in the reorganization. The reorganization ultimately failed, but it was a big issue then, and we spent a lot of time talking about it with Cecil Andrus. We wanted to know his views on how he would manage the Forest Service. Andrus wanted us to know his views, too. He wanted us to know that he wasn't going to change the Forest Service and make it a commodity-oriented organization any more than it was to begin with.

This past February we had a meeting with Secretary Bergland. The whole board met with him for more than an hour. After we left the meeting with him, we had a meeting at the White House with Stu Eizenstat.

Lage: Just the Sierra Club?

Snyder: It was just the board of directors of the club and three or four staff people that we invited to go. They saw us, and they met with us, and then they listened patiently while we told them what our concerns were, and they always responded. They didn't just sit there and listen, but would answer and tell us whether they agreed or disagreed or what they thought they could do or couldn't do.

Lage: How did they respond to criticism about their energy policy, for instance? That's one of the issues the club ended up being quite disappointed with Carter.

Snyder: The president and Stu Eizenstat always took a position that they had gotten the most for the club and for the conservation movement that they could, given the political situation in the Congress. They thought, even though they knew we'd disagree with them, that they had made the best political compromise to protect our interest that could be obtained. That was always their position.

Endorsing the Carter Candidacy: A New Step

Lage: Is this kind of cooperation the reason that the club went further than it's ever gone in endorsing a candidate?

Snyder: I think that had a great deal to do with it. The club perceived it. Even though we had not gotten what we wanted and even though we were disappointed with Carter in many respects, there was still the openness of his administration and its cooperation and its receptiveness on the things that we had been successful at. It was the most open, cooperative

Snyder: administration in the experience of any of us. We thought that, on balance, we would be hard pressed to ever get anything as good again in the foreseeable future, and we better stick with it and see if we couldn't improve it. I think that was the correct judgment.

Lage: What's going to happen now? Can you foretell the future as well?
[laughs]

Snyder: No, I cannot foretell the future, and I don't know. I know that when Nixon was president he had one meeting with members of the environmental community. Apparently, Lyndon Johnson and Ford never had any meetings with them.

Lage: Of course, the environmental community wasn't as strong a political force then.

Snyder: That may be the answer. It may be that we'll continue to have that kind of influence, but I seriously doubt it.

Lage: Does the fact that the club went as far as it did in endorsing Carter mean it may have even less influence now with [Ronald] Reagan in office?

Snyder: No, I don't think so. I think these people are all politicians, and they recognize that the fact that you endorse something is an indication of strength and an indication of political clout. I think that they're astute enough politicians to know that you can't ignore that kind of influence. I think they would try at least to neutralize our influence so that four years from now, or whenever the next political campaign comes around, they could keep us from going bodily over to some other camp.

Politics, Principles and Personal Commitment

Lage: Do you think that the political climate affects the club's policies in the sense that the club makes its policies less uncompromising if they see that the political climate is not as favorable?

Snyder: No, I don't think the club takes political realities into account at all in making its policies. I think we are more like a religious movement that makes its policies from the point of view of what we perceive to be right as a matter of principle.

Lage: The thing that brought this to my mind is the exercise you mentioned yesterday where Mike McCloskey sent out the thought sheet soliciting comments on what club leaders thought the next ten years would bring. He seemed to want people to think about what the political realities would be, what the interests of the country would be, in determining what club policies might be.

Snyder: The thought sheet would be to help determine in what fields we should make policy, not to say that the policy should be weaker than we would ordinarily make it or stronger than it ordinarily would be depending on where our political influence lay. I think he's trying to discern what the issues will be, so that we can take meaningful positions on the most important issues that will be coming along.

Lage: You said the club was like a religious movement. Do you have any expansion on that?

Snyder: That's an often stated proposition, and it's true in many respects. The club is like a religious movement. We all are activated by a kind of fervor to protect the environment that has a religious connotation to it. Nature itself is sort of a religious exhibit. We talk about the temple of the forest and that sort of thing. We use all kinds of allusions to religious symbols in talking about the wild country and nature, and we act that way. We've got our own creed--the resolutions we pass. We are actuated by principle and high moral ideals rather than pragmatism. You can go on and on finding resemblances to religion in the way we do things.

Lage: The other thing the language is like is the military campaign--the "battles." There is no reason they have to be called battles or campaigns.

Snyder: When I was first president I used to get letters. I guess I got during my tenure half a dozen letters from people complaining of the way we used military language and the militaristic tone. I went and looked and counted the number of times military terminology was used in the ballot statements of the candidates. That's true. We're "campaigning," "fighting," "battling" all of the time. The best I can do to relate it to religion is to say it's the Crusades! [laughter]

Lage: When you relate it to religion, do you think there are many in the club where it really is related more directly to religion; not like a religion, but that it grows out of a religious perception of nature, like John Muir's?

Snyder: I don't think so. I have not perceived that. But it's hard to say. You've got to get the person in the woods to see how they relate on a personal basis before you can say it carries over. I feel that way. I feel it, and I know I've expressed it. I've become possessive and have some kind of love-like attachment to things that I've been involved in saving, like the Chattooga River or certain pieces of wilderness. I would have no hesitation in lying down in front of a bulldozer to save something that I had worked to protect. You get that attachment and devotion to them. I think devotion is probably the best way to describe it; a personal attachment and a refusal to allow anybody to mess with it.

Lage: So that's what you see as the driving force?

Snyder: No, that's just me. That's an example of how it can activate one person. I would not say that of anybody else unless I could see them out in the woods and see if they acted that way. I've seen other people do it. This is a story that I've often told. We were in the Congaree Swamp one time measuring trees with Carl Holcomb, who is a forester and a club activist. He was there helping us because of his expertise as a forester. We were trying to catalogue all of the record-sized trees. Carl was amazing us because he would come along with his arms outstretched and he would look at a tree from ten or fifteen feet away. He'd hold his arms out straight, rigid in front of him, and move his hands back and forth, sort of gaging the size of the tree. He'd say, "That tree is so many inches in diameter." We'd go measure it, and he'd be right!

The funny thing about Carl is he kept getting closer to the tree, and he'd put his hands on each side. The first thing you know, Carl was hugging those trees! [laughter] He wasn't doing it consciously. It was just that here was such a great thing, these beautiful, big trees, and he couldn't resist. He just loved them!

Lage: That's a good story. I like to bring these things out because this is the kind of thing that is not apparent if you read the Sierra Club board minutes. The minutes reflect the debates about details and the personal power struggles.

Snyder: Yes, there are power struggles and struggles within struggles on the board. The board members don't do near enough politicking among each other in advance. They wait until the issue gets on the floor, and then there is this huge debate without trying to sort things out in advance. There is very little lobbying. Everybody is taking a personal affront if their position is contradicted. People get into frozen positions, and there is not the warmth that you would expect from a bunch of people working together with a common goal.

Lage: Also, the sense of what it's all about, or a deep attachment to wilderness or clean air or whatever the issue might be, is not apparent on the surface.

Snyder: I'm sure that some of them have that. Who has it in the depth of their feeling can only be measured by seeing them out in the wilderness and seeing how they act. Maybe I'm not a perceptive person. Maybe it's written all over them!

XIII. THE SIERRA CLUB IN THE WIDER SOCIETY

Cooperation and Conflict Among Conservation Groups

Lage: What about relationships with other conservation organizations?

Snyder: Well, I'll tell you the whole story. When I was first elected president, I went to Washington and sat down with an old friend of mine and said, "Let's get it known around here that I'm the president, and let me get some contacts so I will have people I can call." We sat down, and since he was there and he knew people, we made up a list, and we called in my "trap line." We got up, oh, four or five pages of names of people. We got their phone numbers, and I called them, and he called some of them. I spent a couple of days, and I went around and talked to the head people or the important people that we had identified. I went to all of the major organizations in Washington, just to sit down and talk. I did it to find out what their priorities were, what they were working on, and exchange views on an informal basis without any agenda or ax to grind.

I knew at least half of them beforehand. Meeting them and talking to them was nothing new and was not in any way a confrontation or a strain. It was nice to sit down and talk to them and find out what was going on and renew the contact. I wanted to get myself in a position where, if I needed information, I could phone them, and they would know who I was, and what my motivation was. I established good relations with a number of head persons in the Washington conservation offices where most of them are located. Others I knew. I knew Bill Turnage at the Wilderness Society beforehand, Destry Jarvis at the National Parks and Wildlife Association, and some of the people on the committee staff like Cleve Pennix, Harry Crandell, and other people.

Lage: Was this something that other Sierra Club presidents had done?

Snyder: I don't know, but it seemed to be the way to do it.

Lage: I've heard the criticism that the Sierra Club always takes credit for everything that happens in the conservation movement.

Snyder: Everybody does! Every organization that has a hand in any campaign always takes all the credit in their literature. I guess it's a chronic situation, and I don't think there is anything wrong with it.

Lage: You don't think there is resentment of the club for demanding a lion's share of the attention?

Snyder: We never demanded a lion's share of the attention. I don't think we are guilty of that. I think in the literature that we sent out and do send out to raise money and in the reports that we send out to the members of the things we've accomplished, we always take the credit for everything. Everybody knows that there were a bunch of people working on all of those issues. The other organizations do the same thing. You get the fund-raising letters of the Wilderness Society and the Audubon Society, and you'll find that they claim all of the credit, too.

Lage: They think there was no Sierra Club.

Snyder: Yes, I think that's just sort of the rule of the game, and nobody blows the whistle on that on anybody else.

Lage: Were there any problem areas during your presidency in cooperating with other groups?

Snyder: No, I don't think so.

Lage: The Alaska Coalition went smoothly?

Snyder: The Alaska Coalition went very smoothly. When they first organized the Alaska Coalition--who "they" are we'll leave indeterminate--but when it was organized, the coalition got a management consultant to come and help them set it up. The consultant helped them shape the organization and assign roles and duties. It was one of the smartest things that was ever done because it helped the coalition function smoothly and correctly. Everybody had their own role, and their bailiwick was defined so that you didn't have everybody doing every job and nobody knowing what was being done.

Lage: It sounds really professional.

Snyder: It was done right, yes, exactly. We were able to do it because again, everybody put all of their money on Alaska. I guess people had recognized that it ought to be done in every campaign, but we were just never able to afford it. I got along well with all of these people and maintained regular contacts. When I was in Washington, I would phone around and talk to them when I needed information. I was able to call them. I had a working personal relation with people and when

Snyder: I went to New York, at one point, I spent a couple of hours over at Audubon headquarters talking to Russ Peterson and some of his top staff people just exchanging views. We did not have any set agenda, but we talked just so we'd know each other and have good relations. I think it was really good to have done that. In fact, that was one of the things that I recommended to Joe Fontaine. I don't know if he's done it, to take a day or two days when he was in Washington and just go around and get acquainted with the leaders on the staff in other major conservation organizations. It meant a lot to me.

Explaining the Conservation Viewpoint to Industry

Lage: What about club relationships with industry and labor. I think you mentioned that you gave speeches at various industry forums.

Snyder: I gave a number of speeches at industry--not labor--seminars or meetings.

Lage: What kind of response did you get?

Snyder: With one exception, I was received politely and listened to politely even where they disagreed violently. I went to a national energy forum [in 1979] held in Houston organized by the American Gas Association. The forum was attended by people from the gas and oil industry plus people who consumed gas and oil in fabricating and manufacturing industries. I was attacked personally by one of the fellow panelists with whom I was on a panel, namely Carl Bagge, the executive director of the National Coal Association. I was also attacked by some people from the audience who rose to ask questions during the question period. I had never had that happen before. It was distressing, but it was disconcerting, too, because there is no way that I can figure out that you can answer that kind of personal attack without making yourself as bad as the questioner.

Lage: What kind of personal attack was it? Can you recall the nature of it?

Snyder: I can't recall now, but the accusation was that I wasn't serious, that I didn't mean what I said.

Lage: They couldn't make that leap of imagination to believe that someone could really differ from them.

Snyder: Well, it was very distressing at the time. The fact that I have forgotten the details of it may tell a story, too! [laughs]

Lage: With other groups did you feel that they had some measure of respect for your point of view?

Snyder: Yes. I spoke to the American Institute of Chemical Engineers' convention in San Francisco. I spoke on a seminar series at Duke University that was organized by the forestry school, and those in attendance were professional foresters. I spoke in a seminar series at the University of Wyoming on coal utilization and the energy picture. The people there were students, professors, and research people. The EPA has an energy laboratory there and many of the people from the lab were in the audience. I spoke to the Commonwealth Club here in San Francisco, which is business people primarily. It's a business person's luncheon club. They have lectures hand over fist.

The Club and the News Media

Lage: Have you used the news media in your work around the country?

Snyder: Yes, in going around the country talking to chapters and groups, one of the things they did was that they had radio and television and newspaper interviews virtually at every stop. The towns when I didn't do an interview with some media element were rare indeed.

Lage: What kind of reception did you find on the local scene?

Snyder: I found that the newspaper and television and radio people were fair and asked sensible, sensible questions. If I had to characterize it overall, I would say that the questioners were sympathetic to the environmental movement because it's so easy to ask questions that you can't answer and a mean, devilish interviewer--

Lage: [laughs] I should have asked some of those today!

Snyder: Well, you can think of the questions. If somebody wanted to really give a person in a television interview a hard time, they could ask you a question like, "Why are you for all of these coal mining reclamation laws when you know it's putting people out of work?" You can phrase them in a way that it's impossible to give an answer because the question is a loaded, double question to start with. Well, that never happened to me. Nobody ever did that to me, and that leads me to think that either they're superfair or they were not actuated by animosity toward the movement.

Lage: Did you find that the Sierra Club presidency held a certain aura about it?

Snyder: Well, the presidency carries a great deal of prestige, and it was my purpose to use that prestige to advance the goals and aims of the club. I tried to do that. That's one reason why a president should make public appearances and give speeches to hostile or at least neutral forums. That's why the president should use every opportunity to give a radio, television, or newspaper interview because he's carrying the

Snyder: flag, and it's his duty to show the flag at every opportunity. Well, I enjoyed that! [laughter] That was no problem. But I think it's part of the prestige of the office. I would be at a local group or a chapter, and they could get the television interview for me because I was president. It was not because of who I was, but because of the title and position. In the chapter they couldn't get that. I was able to give a lot of help by exercising the prerogative of the title.

Lage: On the local level as well as national?

Snyder: Yes, as well as national. The prestige of the title created an entrée that the lesser officials in the club didn't have. It was the duty of the president, I thought, to take advantage of that, and I did at every opportunity.

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